

Both Sides Now: A Practice-Based Enquiry into Gender Equality in the Music Industry

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Key Terms	3
Abstract	4
Declaration and Copyright Statement	5
Digital Portfolio link	6
Acknowledgements	7
Introduction	8-44
Chapter 1. Access: Creating Space in the Classroom, Curriculum and Canon	45-73
Chapter 2. Agency: Artistic Agency, Industry Structures and Strategies of Resistance	74-107
Chapter 3. Change: Making Change in Practice and Policy	108 -138
Conclusion. Both Sides Now: Reshaping A Discipline	139-145
Interviews and Personal Communications	146
Bibliography	147-159

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Abbreviations and Key Terms

ACE Arts Council England - a non-departmental public body of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport responsible for distributing lottery funding to promoting the performing, visual and literary arts in England

AIM Association of Independent Music – a not-for-profit trade body that represent the independent record sector,

BPI British Phonographic Industry – the trade association for the UKs record music sector

BSN Both Sides Now

CCI Creative and Cultural Industries

DCMS Department of Culture Media and Sport

EDI Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

GMCA Greater Manchester Combined Authority

ISM Incorporated Society of Musicians – a membership body protecting the rights of protecting the rights of those working in the music profession

KS – the four ‘Key Stages’ in primary school (KS1 and 2) and secondary school (KS3 and 4)

LCRCA Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

MPA Music Publishers Association

MPG Music Producers Guild

MU Musicians Union – a trade union representing all areas of the music business

Music Week – trade paper for the UK music industry

PRS for Music, Performing Rights Society for Music - a royalties collection society for music writers and creators

PRSF Performing Rights Society Foundation – the charitable arm of the PRS, a grant giving body to individual artists and charities working in artist development

PPL Phonographic Performance Limited – a collection and distribution agency for music performers (rather than writers and creators)

TDP Talent Development Partner – A funded PRSF network of ‘artist development’ organisations UK Music

Abstract

This thesis critically examines the gender gap in the music industry through a practice-based enquiry. The study is based on my professional practice developing and delivering a large-scale participatory programme for early career, female musicians called Both Sides Now (BSN). Through BSN I proposed an outcomes-based Theory of Change (Kirkpatrick, 1978) built around the framework of Access, Agency and Change. The thesis is structured around these three areas of enquiry which pertain to significant junctures in the personal and professional development of female musicians; educational access and early influence, artistic agency, pre-professional development and career pathways. Taking each 'key word' (MacCabe and Yanacek, 2018) in turn it tests this conceptual framing, pursuing a primary line of enquiry which asks what needs to change and how?

Guiding the investigation is a commitment to the principles of feminist research and an exploration of the concept of 'affect' within the discourse of change-making. This, I argue opens up new knowledge that is felt and embodied and offers a contemporary understanding of ways in which the practices and structures of the industry are discriminatory.

The practice submission offers a portfolio of documentary and archival materials and an ongoing body of work which includes a new teaching resource for the music curriculum, female-only projects and the BSN Manifesto for Change which was presented to the Culture Committee of the European Parliament in October 2019. This is presented alongside a written submission which provides a theoretically informed analysis of the initiative and its findings.

Collectively these insights position BSN as an interventionist practice. They argue that change is required on multiple, intersecting levels in order to comprehensively respond to this inequality and to reshape a discipline which has for too long overlooked and under-valued the contribution of women.

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Digital Portfolio

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Introduction

This thesis presents a practice-based enquiry into the under-representation of female musicians in the music industry. The study has been informed, influenced and inspired by my seven-year journey devising, developing and delivering a large-scale intervention for early career artists in the North of England called Both Sides Now, between 2013 and 2020. My main concerns relate to the ways in which the routes into the industry and working practices within it deter access, limit professional progression and reinforce gender stereotyping - showing little sign of changing. The thesis unfolds over three main chapters where I examine factors such as participatory access, artistic agency, societal attitudes, and the structures and practices which create persistent inequalities at odds with the industry's professed meritocratic and liberal values. In the UK women make up only 17% of registered songwriters and composers¹, under 20% of acts signed to record labels, 14% of artists signed to music publishers and less than 20% of festival acts². Women own or run only 15% of independent record labels³, earn, on average, 33.8% less than men at major record labels⁴, and represent an estimated 5% of all audio engineers⁵. These statistics, which have remained stubbornly around the same percentages for the duration of this research, fuel the focus of my enquiry, which asks what needs to change in order to enable greater equality across the landscape of music, and how?

The thesis offers a body of work that critically explores these questions and offers new insights and perspectives on ways in which the gender gap can be understood and remedied. To do this I integrate analysis of the lived experiences of participants and professionals involved in the Both Sides Now programme with key feminist theories. I examine the social and cultural patterns that facilitate ritualistic repetition and reinforce gender stereotypes through the production and consumption of music. Through this research I highlight gaps and concerns in current industry workings and through my practice I develop a female-focussed intervention as an instrument for personal and collective change. In this introduction I set out the context of my

¹ Performing Rights Society (2017)

² Bain, (2019) *Counting the Music Industry* 2019: 4-5

³ Association of Independent Music (2018)

⁴ Music Business World (2018), Gender Pay Gap Review

⁵ Sound Producers Guild (2018)

research and review literature on the feminist theories and popular music studies which underpin the thesis. I outline my methodological approach and analyse the personal and professional practice and desire for change that drives this enquiry.

Personal Reflection and Research Motivation

As a young musician growing up, I was never particularly aware of the ways in which gender inequality or sexism influenced the day-to-day practices and inner workings of the music industry: comments and opinions that I would now challenge or question I just used to accept as ‘the way things were’. But since 2013, when I returned to work following a period of maternity leave, I have found myself with a heightened consciousness, curiosity and concern around women’s role and representation in music. My role, at the time of writing, is Head of Programmes for Brighter Sound, an arts organisation which specialises in music-based projects that range from youth participation to adult education and professional development with emerging and mid-career musicians. Brighter Sound works across the North of England, nationally and internationally to deliver a portfolio of activity, which consists of numerous individual programmes and projects from workshops and masterclasses to commissions, residencies, mentoring and live events. All of the work supports and showcases young and early-career musicians. The values of the company are rooted in a socially engaged arts practice⁶, which, as I go on to discuss throughout the thesis, has evolved alongside a discourse of policy-making that places an economic value on the arts to address social issues. As such, terminology such as ‘access’, ‘inclusion’, ‘equality’ and ‘diversity’ is common parlance within the Brighter Sound workplace. However, this commitment has never been more explicit in my practice than through Both Sides Now.

My perspective as Head of Programmes has enabled me to observe the behaviours of musicians and the discriminatory practices of the music industry and, through this, begin to understand more specifically where gendered differences impact on the process of making music. My initial empirical observations provoked further investigation into the gendering of roles, representation, behaviours and attitudes

⁶ Socially engaged practice is used to describe any art form that is in some way collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work

(themes which are explored in more detail throughout the thesis), but the most immediately interesting finding was the lack of equality relating to male and female representation across Brighter Sound projects. In the activity for young people, participation was weighted towards male dominance at 62% and in projects for over 18's (activity considered to be for early career professionals) there was an average of 75% male participation to 25% female⁷. When it came to live performances there was a stark visual representation of this disparity on stage with the very few visible female performers funnelled into a finite number of roles, predominantly as backing vocalists and/or playing the keyboard. These were the first eye-opening statistics that I uncovered and they were of particular interest because they were indicative of a point in someone's career where they consider themselves to be either an established professional or on a journey to becoming one, a point where they can see that they have the potential to make a living from their skill. The contrast between male and female representation at this professional level and the concern I felt around this disparity was the opening motivation for my enquiry.

As I began to conceptualize a line of enquiry, I also started to reflect on my own experiences as a young musician, as a music student, music fan, in my professional capacity and, more recently, as a parent. This process made me realise that a lot of the questions I was asking of my practice were informed by my own background, particularly growing up in towns across the North of England in the 1990s. These observations included the absence of female role models - aggravated by the male dominated production sites of rehearsal rooms, studios and gigs. It was also interesting to reflect on my self-perception at the time and the concerns I had about my own ability and professional potential which were compounded by the 'affect' of these gendered experiences. In short, what this enquiry has opened up is a retrospective analysis of my own journey to what Ahmed (2017) describes as 'becoming feminist'. The process of exploring and analysing the conditions in which female musicians are operating has been oddly cathartic. I have found the tools and terminology to open up a broader critical account of the norms which shaped my life in ways I did not realise, the subtle processes performed unconsciously that are

⁷ Of the 8 Brighter Sound live performances taking place between March 2014 – October 2015 a report on participant data highlighted there were 96 male performers and only 36 female performers.

adopted as natural and reinforced through almost daily repetition: the 'good for a girl' comments, the feelings of not belonging, the need to permanently modify my behaviour to fit in. This is not to say that I have not enjoyed the musical opportunities I feel privileged to have had – it is just to acknowledge the perspective enabled through this theoretical exploration. Ahmed suggests that the first step in achieving feminist consciousness is “registering that something is difficult or wrong”, affirming that the potential for change starts by questioning and that “feminist work is often memory work” (2017:22). She proposes that “feminist ideas are what we come up with to make sense of what persists” (2017:12), adding that by “naming it as ‘sexist’ you are making it more tangible” and that “by exposing a problem you pose a problem” (2017:37). This quote has particular resonance for me, and I am sure for many others, in that it encapsulates the dichotomy within numerous scenarios where something does not feel right but where articulating *why* is complex and can invoke vulnerability, particularly when, as the only girl, the overarching precedent is to fit in and get along.

In addition to the culture of the music scenes of my youth, I also recognise that standing in my way of speaking out about it was my disidentification with what I understood feminism to be. Rather than seeing it the way I do now – as what hooks (2017) refers to as “the movement to end sexism, sexual exploitation and sexual oppression” (2017:3) – I had been influenced by the post-feminist rhetoric which played out across the media and in particular the popular culture of the time. In the musical climate of the 1990s there were two questionably feminist sensibilities being modelled. In the UK the Spice Girls were selling an artificially constructed bubble-gum feminism under the guise of ‘Girl Power’ and in the USA a more aggressive spirit was embodied through the Riot Grrrl movement. Somewhere in between these extremes lay the UK independent music scene towards which I gravitated. The movement known latterly as Brit Pop elevated the profile of musicians who might previously have been regarded as ‘alternative’ or ‘underground’ and created a new, mainstream platform which consumed the circles I was moving in at the time. Although still heavily male-dominated, it did pave the way for some notable female role models outside of pop stars like Kylie Minogue and Madonna who had been the dominant female icons of the 1980s. As Leonard (2007) documents, the indie rock scene of the nineties was perceived as offering “greater accessibility to women”

although stressing that it is not necessarily “less patriarchal in its organisation and practice” (2007:63). The female-fronted, guitar-wielding bands of Elastica, Sleeper, Echobelly and Lush all personified what I considered to be powerful enactments of female music-making. The lyrical content was unabashedly provocative, loud and forthright, unlike the helpless, love-struck rhetoric which had dominated most of the pop music I’d previously listened to. These women had short hair, drank pints, smoked and generally inspired me through what I thought was the epitome of ‘choice feminism’. The social and cultural landscape of the nineties, and specifically the *apparent* liberalism of indie, ‘ladette’ culture, was something I experienced with little acknowledgement of the broader narrative of the time. But what was happening in music was also part of a significant social shift in the way that women were being portrayed in the media and on stage – slightly expanding the finite number of archetypes we were used to but with no less stereotyping, no less sexualising and not much more in the way of change.

I now realise that I was growing up during what Faludi (1992) and McRobbie (2009) describe as the post-feminist ‘backlash’. Faludi argues that “the term post feminism is part of a rebranding strategy by the media to signify the *pastness* of feminism, using it as a way to conjure up a new story for a younger generation” (1992:16). McRobbie develops this argument to suggest that the media manipulated language such as ‘empowerment’ and ‘choice’ to conjure the illusion of equality and to make ‘old feminism’ unpalatable to young women. My inability to recognise this, and my general disidentification with the concept of feminism in this context, can be further understood through Probyn’s (1993) conceptualisation of ‘feminist reflexivity’ and the opposition in feminist theory between the physical and perceived accounts of existence – the ontological and the epistemological. Probyn refers to this as the “ontological sentencing of women based in the primacy of their posited being” (1993:94), distinguishing between an embodied sense of self and the self that we are expected to be in social terms. This has resonance for me in that I was unwilling to believe that my gender was holding me back and felt instead that it was probably more about my ability, my confidence or a combination of the two.

As time has gone on and my understanding of social and cultural inequalities has deepened so too has my relationship with feminism. I now recognise the differences

between my sense of self and the gender-based social expectations I grew up around. This question of affect is what has driven my transition to becoming feminist. As Hemmings (2012) states, “in order to know differently, we have to feel differently” (2012:12), and with these new-found tools I have embarked on this activist practice or, as Ahmed describes it, ‘diversity work’. This, Ahmed suggests, is “the work we do when we are trying to transform an institution; or, to be more specific, the work we do when we are trying to open up institutions to those who have historically been excluded from them” (2017:93). In my case this combination of practice and research seeks to open up the institutions across the landscape of music and to disrupt the relationship between ontological and epistemological conditions for the next generation of young female musicians.

Moving back to my return to work following the birth of my child, and my perspective as a creative ‘diversity’ practitioner, I began to contemplate the way that gender inequality was replicated in other areas of the industry and the exclusionary practices that might be limiting female participation, asking the question what could be done to change things. In response to the lack of female participation across our programme I began to pilot some ‘safe space’ all-female projects as a testbed for organisational learning, exploring ways to model a change in Brighter Sound’s working practices. It started small with a few courses delivered from our base in Manchester. I was particularly interested in creating opportunities in areas where women had been historically less well represented and the content for these pilot projects included: drumming, lead guitar lines and entry-level music technology. The impact, even on this very small, localised scale, was significant, attracting interest from increased numbers of young women. At the end of this research phase I programmed our first all-female residency. The residencies are a major strand of our artist development programme, and for this one, led by Beth Orton, we received a record 365 applications⁸ from emerging female artists responding to our call-out. At this stage I was still following a line of enquiry about the value of these ‘all female’ spaces, about the difference (if any) that it made to the artists we were working with, and listening to countless concerns from young women who were worried about not being good

⁸ This was the highest residency response we had received in three years of residency activity, outnumbering the next highest by 240. This is particularly significant when we consider that only 31 (c. 25%) of the 125 applicants to the latter residency were female. [Is this what you meant?]

enough, not having enough confidence, or not knowing what to do as a next step in their career. Concurrently, my secondary analysis, examining the structural position of women within the music industry and the issues affecting their representation (both statistical and visual) was further evidencing how much more widely spread the issue was than just in Brighter Sound activity.

This early research made me fully realise the scarcity of all-female environments in the music-making process, the isolation in which so many of these emerging artists were working and the impact that female alliance could have in building change-making. It was at this point that the concept for Both Sides Now was conceived.

Research Rationale

I began this thesis with a desire to better understand the gender gap in the music industry and the ways in which Brighter Sound, through the Both Sides Now (henceforth BSN) programme, could support artists to navigate and reverse this gap. As I discuss, there are some important studies of women in the music industry (Leonard, 1997; Whiteley, 1997, 2000; Bayton, 1992, 2006; Burns and Lafrance, 2002) and there are also other significant commentators in the media who have observed the barriers and issues for women when making their living through music. However there appeared to be little contemporary systematic investigation into the impact of changing conditions in the music industry today or the relationship between the structural position of women within the music industry and other extrinsic or intrinsic factors.

To put this in context when I began this research the conversation around gender equality in the music industry was quite nascent and described by the Arts Council, at the time of applying for BSN funding, as 'a gap' in terms of the 'funding portfolio' (meaning no other funded arts organisations were addressing this issue). However, during the period in which I have been researching and delivering BSN I have observed a concomitant reawakening of feminism and an increase in public commentary within the broader framework of equal rights and gender equality. This has been catalysed by several significant anniversaries, campaigns and events including a series of government-backed initiatives to mark the centenary of the 1918

Representation of the People Act which saw the first women get the right to vote. The heritage-led Vote100 campaign became a platform for consciousness raising alongside contemporary enactments of feminist activism precipitating the emergence of a number of new 'women in music' initiatives including the PRSF's Key Change campaign, the publication Music Week's 'women in music' awards and Spotify and Smirnoff's Equaliser collaboration. More information about these, and other, similar initiatives is presented in this [typology](#). This table and [overview](#) situates BSN within the context of other initiatives which have, as their primary motivation, women and music. It serves to provide knowledge of the emerging critical context and professional frames within which the practice is pursued.

In order to situate the research contribution developed through BSN I began with a review of key literatures to establish how music's gender gap and the need for change has been theorised by others. This thesis takes a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the gender gap in music industry. It is informed by, and contributes predominantly to, the field of popular music studies and gender studies. With the overarching aim of examining routes to equality, the research is also influenced by and aims to influence UK cultural policy.

There is a broad variety of research in these scholarly fields of interest, encompassing books, journals, grey and white literature, and journalistic discourse. Collectively the review of this literature identifies some key messages, synthesizing and highlighting a cross-cutting narrative of equality and positioning my research in a temporal context. Supporting this approach is a commitment to feminist perspectives and practices, as I go on to discuss in the methodology section. These guiding principles have also informed the source material I have analysed, which has a particular focus on Western feminist theorists from the UK and USA.

Feminism and Gender Studies

As I have acknowledged, this is a broad and well researched area of study. The purpose of this section is not to trace the entire history of gender studies. Rather, my intention is to identify key literature which helps to contextualise my contribution to knowledge in this field as I explore the dialectic between the general principles of feminism and the variable social situation within which I am working. Recognising the

way in which feminist theory has developed out of and for women's activism, I draw on the separate but interrelated themes of gender studies, feminism and women's movements to illustrate the relationship between feminist practices and knowledge production, aligning with the practice-led methodology of this research.

Feminism has been one of the most wide-reaching movements of the last century, felt in areas of social, political and cultural life worldwide. By the time the first formal organised feminist movement came to prominence through the work of the Suffragettes, there was a clear rationale as to what being a feminist meant, with clear aims and intentions for the movement focussing on women's legal and political rights. Once universal suffrage came into effect from 1918, the movement dissipated in terms of public perception until de Beauvoir's seminal text *The Second Sex* (1949). De Beauvoir's theory of male primacy and female otherness puts forward the suggestion that the prevailing inequality originates from a social rather than biological form. Though not without criticism in the lack of agency extended to 'woman', these concepts retain a core function in evolving feminist thought and informed the explosion of writing which followed (Friedan 1963; Mitchell 1966; Millet 1970; Firestone 1970; Greer 1970). This second wave of feminism provoked extensive theoretical discussion about the origins of women's oppression, the nature of gender and the role of the family. Entwined with the activism of the Women's Liberation Movement, issues including equal pay, equal education, free contraception and childcare were brought to the forefront of feminist discourse, leading to legislative gains such as The Equal Pay Act of 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975.

Although this second wave pioneered important and progressive thought, it has been criticised for a range of reasons. The most significant of these is that many studies have treated women as a homogenous group of predominantly middle class, straight, white, cis-gendered women. As hooks (1984) highlights, the experiences of working-class black and white women in the USA are insurmountably different, yet each belongs to the category 'woman'. The micropolitics of individualism have been instrumental in shaping subsequent feminist discourse, with prominent theorists writing on identity and gender including Butler (1990; 2004), whose work moves beyond the material considerations which had previously dominated Gender Studies.

As Butler states, “the feminist ‘we’ is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seeks to represent” (1990:195). Butler’s theory of performativity is similarly important in highlighting that theory is not just about what we think but also about what we do.

While feminist progress continues to be made, the post-feminist discourse as discussed earlier offers a useful framework to understand divisions of feminism which on one side rejected the dogma of ‘old feminism’ (Walters 1998) and on the other critiques the illusion of ‘choice feminism’ (Faludi 1991; McRobbie 2009). These contrasting perspectives are important in framing the contemporary context and in understanding the way in which change-making needs to be shaped.

At the time of writing, a new juncture in feminism has been reached, a critical moment which some scholars (Munro 2012; Cochrane 2013; Chamberlain 2017) are referring to as an emergent fourth wave. This emergent wave provides a critical context to my practice. The wave is characterised through a close alignment with popular culture, an interconnected relationship with technology and further fragmentation in order to confront the issue of intersectionality. Influential theorists (hooks 1984, 2017; Anzaldua 2015; Emejulu and Sobande 2019) have spoken out about the overlooking of women of colour within feminism and there is an emerging discourse relating to trans people, non-binary people and gender non-conformity.

Fourth Wave Feminism as a Critical Framework

This section briefly introduces the context in which the fourth wave of feminism is operating, laying the foundations for more in-depth discussion throughout the thesis. The origins of fourth wave feminism are proposed by Cochrane as the result of a series of catalysing factors behind the surge in feminist activism. She cites unrest relating to the political climate in the UK,⁹ increasing debates about body image, and a focus on micropolitical challenges to sexism and misogyny insofar as they appear in everyday rhetoric. Munro argues that the role of the Internet and social media is

⁹ Responding to the Conservative / Liberal Democrat coalition government (2010-2015) and a culture of protest and resistance against austerity measures

central in this discussion, as it has facilitated the creation of global communities of feminists sharing and discussing experiences and fuelling activism. She highlights that the significant development to consider in this new method of 'doing feminism' is the power and political potential of the Internet to give voice and a platform to the people and the issues still marginalised by the mainstream. Chamberlain examines the fourth wave through the lens of 'affective temporality', acknowledging the troubled history of the notion of waves. She debates whether a new wave of feminism is emerging, or even necessary, given that not all the aims of the second and third waves have yet been met, and suggests a haptic dimension to a movement with understanding of its past and present. Reflecting through this lens to the revitalised movement of the twenty-tens, Chamberlain makes the point that when a 'wave' is stimulated through the 'affect' of a moment it is marked by an intensity of strength and force. She warns of the finite nature of the affects and temporalities in creating the wave operating with an unsustainable energy. She closes her argument with the statement: "Affect is central to creating such moments of feminist intensity. It recognises that the intensity of mass feeling not only touches upon the feminists involved but touches on the wider society in need of transformation" (2017:195). Applying this is the context of 'Internet feminism', Chamberlain reinforces Munro's analysis of the political potential for the Internet to drive the fourth wave of feminism. The implications from the discussion about temporality in relation to my practice and the broader movement for gender equality act as a reminder of the time sensitivity to this work and the opportunity afforded by the current climate to galvanise a movement toward making change happen in the music industry.

At the heart of the fourth wave feminist movement is a shift away from homogenisation and heteronormative standards of living out gender in favour of a more individualistic approach. Similarly, binary distinctions of patriarchy which have upheld the notion of oppressor and oppressed are increasingly recognised as unhelpful in enabling a more substantive account of female agency to emerge, as the thesis goes on to explore. However, in the context of my research feminist knowledge and feminist theory is useful for the broader critical endeavour of imagining how things could be different. In order to develop this line of enquiry, I reflect in more depth on the concept of 'affect' to offer what Sedgwick (2003) describes as a 'nondualistic' account of the process of change-making, rooted in

feminist knowledge. I base my definition of 'affect' on the work of Gregg and Seigworth (2010), whose analysis states:

Affect arises in the midst of inbetween-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage of forces or intensities. That is, affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves. Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces— visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion— that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability. (2010:6)

Different applications of affect are framed through the lens of 'emotions' and our ability to affect and be affected. Brennan analyses affect as "energies transmitted through bodily encounters" (2004: 25), using the concept of 'affective atmosphere' to demonstrate the inextricable link between emotional experience and the social environment. Ahmed (2004, 2010, 2017) returns to the concept of affect in discussion around happiness, 'diversity work' and 'becoming feminist': this work is influential throughout the thesis.

The concept of 'affect' is important to my analysis in that it opens up a new way of understanding how the practices and structures of the industry work and offers a way of denoting a more amplified account of experience as a way of thinking, acting, and knowing differently. Engaging with this as an orienting concept, interwoven throughout the thesis, affect theory introduces a new dimension into the discourse of gender equality in the music industry, moving beyond analysis that relies solely on an account of structure against individual agency. While knowledge of structure and agency remains part of the thesis discussion, my concern with affect provides a

perspective which was previously missing from the narrative of change-making. Perhaps, as Åhäll (2010) suggests, there is a reluctance to engage with affect studies that relate back to the historic perception of the politics of emotion and its association with “the personal, the body and the feminine”, which positions affect as “the constitutive other to reason the objective, the mind, the masculine” (2010:3). I argue that in actuality locating an account of affect in and on the lives of female musicians will address the absence of a level of analysis relating to felt and embodied knowledge of the industry’s operating processes. As the statistics consistently demonstrate, the opening up of spaces for women has not meant actual feminist change of those spaces: it is not enough to simply ‘just add women’. This thesis sets out to better understand why a change is being made and how that change impacts on the experience of others.

Popular Music and Feminist Musicology

Having discussed and acknowledged the foundational thoughts which influenced and shaped feminist politics over the last century, I turn now to a music-specific feminism. Keen to understand how other researchers have conceptualised the gender differences and inequalities in music traditions, I looked to critical discourse in the field of feminist popular music studies and feminist musicology.

While the focus of my research is predominantly contemporary popular music, women’s historic lack of visibility in pre-pop genres is also an area of significance. According to McClary (1993), “Prior to 1970 very little was known – or, at least, remembered about women in music who participated in the Western art tradition” (1993:399), but more recently this is an area where studies in music practices have sought to address issues of inequality. One of the first contributions was from feminist musicologists Bowers and Tick’s (1987) whose edited volume of essays explores the in-depth histories of specific composers at specific moments in time, illuminating the historical contexts that shaped and defined their achievements. Similarly, Neuls-Bates (1996), looks to uncover and restore historical absences through a collection of source readings which offer an account of the lives and experiences of female composers. Rather than construct a narrative history, Neuls-Bates explores the challenging nature of women’s engagement with Western music

through letters, statements and polemic debates. These works deal predominantly with individual women in specific, chronological contexts but the accounts are far from linear: navigating the text is described by McClary as “hop[ping] among these isolated islands of information separated by gulfs of ignorance” (1993:410). Further edited volumes which present compilations of research on women in music include, *Woman and Music: A History*, edited by Pendle (2010), offers a broader account of women making music beyond the white, Western tradition that aligns with the practice of ethnomusicologists, who have usually included women in their studies as a matter of course. Koskoff’s (1987) edited collection of ethnographic writings on music and gender in cross-cultural perspectives contains essays which study women’s participation in traditional music from across the globe.

In contemporary Western genres of pop, rock and jazz there is a growing body of literature restoring female erasure and representing feminist narratives as important cultural sites in music-making practices. Steward and Garratt (1984), Bayton (1992, 1998) Leonard (1997), Whiteley (1997, 2000), and O’Brien, L (2012) are among the writers who introduce the ideologies of feminism into the process of production, performance and consumption of music. Using interviews and anecdotes, they tell the stories of gendered practices and gendered performance in the everyday lives of professional musicians from the 1960s onwards. More recently, experiences of sexism and sexual harassment have been accorded greater visibility through a growing number of autobiographical accounts (e.g. Albertine, 2015; Gordon, 2015; Carvello, 2018) and interview-based books (Raphael, 2018; Meighan, 2020) which feature candid recollections about the subtleties of routine misogyny. I engage with these formats and contexts as critical texts throughout the thesis. These are particularly interesting in considering the relationship between the fourth wave of feminism and popular culture.

Cultural Policy and Social Inclusion

To conclude this literature review, I now examine critical literature on the specific UK policy context for inequalities within the music and cultural industries more broadly. Through this analysis I also explore the wider political imperatives and ideologies that have shaped my professional practice. The period on which this focuses begins with the inauguration of the New Labour government in 1997 and covers, more

broadly, developments under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government (2010 to 2014) and successive Conservative government who are in power at the time of writing. There are a number of significant texts which examine the field and function of cultural policy (Bennett, 1995; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt, 2005; Thorsby, 2010; Cairney, 2011; Bell and Oakley, 2014; O'Brien, D. 2015), using different using different methodological approaches to analyse its role, scope and impact. Through these studies it is well documented that culture in the UK is governed by an 'arms-length' principle where, as Bell and Oakley state, "direct government involvement in culture is limited to granting various intermediary organisations (sometimes labelled quangos), certain decision-making powers and devolving budgets for them to allocate – the Arts Council being the best-known example" (2014:62). Thorsby (2010) describes the Arts Council model as based on two fundamental principles: the 'arm's length' and the 'peer review' principles. He identifies the strengths of the 'arm's length' principle as enabling the Arts Council to "make its own decisions without reference to any government minister and without influence being imposed on it from any part of the political machinery" (2010:70), the mutual benefit of this to government being that there is no responsibility should an unpopular decision be made; and herein lies the function of the second 'peer review' principle, which "holds that funding allocations to the arts should be determined by experts – the 'peers' of those being funded" (2010:71). This approach demonstrates a level of accountability beyond the individual perspectives of the grant-giving body.

Since 1997 responsibility for the Arts Council has been placed within the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), at the time a newly formed government department giving an oversight of all cultural activities to one minister. This was implemented by the New Labour government and aligned to the policy paper *Create the Future* (1997), mandating that arts should be for the benefit of the many not the few. This report established the concept of social inclusion and equality of opportunity in the British political context, placing an emphasis on social *obligations* rather than *rights*. Social inclusion objectives were thus incorporated across the

whole of DCMS and with that came pressure for the cultural sector to measure their impact against the government's social agenda¹⁰.

While the use of arts and culture had been an established part of local and national policies for moral improvement and civic regulation (e.g. Victorian parks and museums) what was distinctive about the New Labour era was the highly centralised nature of its instrumentalism. This marked a politically important shift in cultural policy making based on value for money and the recognition of external policy objectives. The move towards a value exchange system was the subject of The influential Policy Action Team (PAT) 10 report (1999) which established the interest in arts and culture as means for social inclusion and positive activities, introducing terminology such as 'investment' rather than 'subsidy'. This was met with concerns about the 'commodification' of the arts (Gray, 2000) of setting up instrumental values in opposition to intrinsic (Hewison and Holden, 2011) and of emptying the arts of their 'unique characteristics' which become "lost within a much broader cultural canvas" (Caust, 2003:5). Belfiore (2020) raises concerns about a lack of infrastructure and expertise to support this change in direction. While these are important concerns, Thorsby remarks how an increased interest in the relationship between the arts and other areas of public policy has brought to the foreground a discourse of equality. This has opened up a broader conversation led by O'Brien about the role of cultural production and consumption in reproducing economic, and other forms of inequality, a narrative which is still actively debated in relation to the work performed, the workforce producing it and the broader policies of the sector (Taylor, 2020; Brook et al, 2020).

The 2010 Equality Act, passed under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition, marked a further shift in the discourse of equality towards the notion of 'duty' and 'imperative'. The Act highlighted gender along with nine other protected characteristics¹¹ (most of which intersect with gender) where action was required to eliminate discrimination and advance equality in organisational structures and

¹⁰ Including crime, health, employment and education

¹¹ The nine protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation

policies. An important step in acknowledging the broader societal issue, this imperative was, in turn, imposed upon government-funded bodies including Arts Council England (ACE)¹². For ACE this became a primary focus area, fuelling a body of grey literature and strategy documents to set out their commitment towards diversifying the production, consumption and impact of the arts. Their responsive 2010 strategy *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* offers a statement of inclusivity and represents a move away from the binary distinction between excellence and accessibility in arts practices. This was followed in 2011 by *The Creative Case for Diversity* report, which benchmarks the diversity of the arts sector through a range of indicators. Both ACE and its grantees have to monitor and evaluate their impact against the protected characteristics¹³ as defined by the Equality Act 2010, alongside class and socio-economic status.

The Arts Council's subsequent *Let's Create* 10-year strategy was launched in 2020 consistent in its commitment to tackling persistent problems of inequality in the arts but calling for more to be done. The four investment principles include Ambition and Quality, Dynamism, Environmental Responsibility and, most relevant to this study, Inclusivity and Relevance where reference is made to ensuring that the arts sector is reflective of the diversity of the communities which it serves. A specific outcome relating to the advancement of equality through investment and policy-making. The Strategy states "In future, we will ask organisations who receive regular investment from us to agree targets for how their governance, leadership, employees, participants, audiences and the work they make will reflect the communities in which they work. These targets will cover both protected characteristics (including disability, sex, and race) and socio-economic background" (Arts Council, 2020). This more formally situates the social agenda of inclusion and diversity as a precondition to grant funding with regard to beneficiaries but also employed staff within cultural organisations. Additionally, it cements further the funded sector as drivers of change.

The *Let's Create* strategy of 2020 acknowledges the need for greater efforts to equalise access to the arts. This is a concern that has been raised in the work of

¹² In 1994 the Arts Council of Great Britain was divided into three separate bodies: Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council and Arts Council Wales

¹³ age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation

Oakley, 2004, 2006; and Eikhof, 2017. The latter's analysis of employment in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) highlights the dominance of a young, white, male and middle-class demographic. She states that:

“women appear to leave the CCI in their 30s and 40s. Female workers in the CCI are much less likely than men to be aged 50 or older (11% vs 19%) which means that women are significantly under-represented in advanced and thus more influential and better paid positions. Genuine gender pay gaps persist as well (i.e. once age and occupational segregation are controlled for) which evidences that women not only find it more difficult to get into and get on in the CCI but they also get less out of working there (Eikhof, 2017:290)” .

Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) highlight further flaws in the diversity discourses framing current policy initiatives, stating: “In essence, current career development schemes and many diversity policies do nothing to challenge the white, middleclass male ‘somatic norm’ (2020: 215). They add that the approach is based on “lifting individuals out of their underprivileged state rather than challenging how privilege is constructed and misrecognised as legitimacy” (2020: 216). This argument has been at the core of much recent scholarship critiquing diversity schemes and is presented here as a key area of analysis which I relate back to throughout the thesis.

For the commercial music industry, which operates largely outside of the control of ACE accountability, the argument of a market-led approach has historically acted as a defence against issues of gender inequality making it a challenge for the language of sexism to be heard. Breen (2008) highlights how it “is caught within the extremes of two vulgar theoretical assumptions: (i) popular music just happens, and (ii) the market will provide” (2008:195). This is problematic in relation to gender equality (and other areas of inequality and under-representation) in that it absolves those working in the industry of any responsibility and sets the precedent for a market-led argument against active change-making.

However, concerns about inequalities began to be raised in trade and consumer press throughout the twenty-tens, alongside a raft of damning reports highlighting

concerns pertaining to the aforementioned statistical under-representation (Bain, 2019), wide spread issues of sexual harassment and abuse (Musicians Union, 2019) and a stark lack of seniority and Board representation in trade bodies (Women in CTRL, 2021) . Women in CTRL are a member community who represent the voice of women working in the industry; their *Seat at the Table* report analyses disparities of equity and representation in senior staff (at CEO, Chairperson and Board level) across the twelve UK Music industry trade bodies¹⁴ highlighting an average of 30% female representation. Collectively these reports fuel the narrative concern of this thesis: that women remain largely under-represented particularly in more senior and influential positions.

Further effort was mobilised through the work of UK Music's¹⁵ Diversity Taskforce responding to the Equality Act with a series of interventions¹⁶, with the intention of 'boosting inclusion and diversity across the industry'. Since 2016 the Taskforce have produced an annual survey and report to benchmark progress with regard to the participation and representation of people from protected groups. The reports show a gradual increase in female representation which the 2020 results place at 49.6% but support Eikhof's findings that above the age of 45 representation reduces, standing, according to her 2017 report at 35% (Eikhof, 2017:297).

I highlight these areas of policy-making and politically-driven interventions to further evidence the rationale for this thesis, to contextualise the origins of my professional practice and to unite the relationship between my practice and change-making, an area which I reflect on in greater depth in the Change chapter. Collectively these reports also highlight a jarring disconnect between political progress and the reality of women's lived experience. This very focussed selection of literature goes some way towards highlighting the complexity behind the issue of policy-making and the relationship between the subsidised and commercial industries. The centralised

¹⁴ The twelve UK industry trade bodies studied in the report are: The Association of Independent Music (AIM) representing ; The Ivors Academy (BASCA); British Phonographic Institute (BPI); Featured Artist Coalition (FAC) representing the voice of lead artists at legal and government level; Incorporated Society of Musicians (ISM) providing legal advice and representation to member musicians; Music Managers Forum (MMF) representing music managers, Music Publishers Association (MPA) representing music publishers; Music Producers Guild (MPG) representing producers; Music Venue Trust (MVT) representing venues; Phonographic Performance Ltd. (PPL); Performing Rights Society (PRS) representing songwriters and composers and the umbrella body UK Music.

¹⁵ UK Music is a lobbying organisation representing the collective interests of the production side of UK's commercial music industry

¹⁶ Including an Equality and Diversity charter, an Internship Code of Practice and training for industry staff

approach from DCMS under New Labour laid the seeds for expectations about the responsibility of arts in addressing social inclusion and equality. The recent ACE strategy and performance management framework for its funds embeds this within organisational delivery as discussed in relation to the work of organisations like Brighter Sound. This sits in contrast with the assumptions of 'the primacy of the market' for regulating popular music, and also is focused on interventions which aim to 'lift individuals out of their excluded state' rather than addressing structural conditions (which are replicated by the market). This opens a space for further discussion throughout the thesis about the way my practice intervenes in the way policy discourses are produced.

Research Questions, Approach and Methodology

The two central strands in this methodology are my professional practice and a commitment to the principles of feminist research. Here I describe the rationale in selecting these methodologies as a means through which to incorporate my personal and professional perspectives into this field of enquiry and to explore how I can use my role as a practitioner-researcher to generate new knowledge into the wider discourse on gender equality. Pursuing an insightful and reflective line of enquiry my primary research interests explore the notion of making change in relation to gender representation in the music industry asking what needs to change, and how. Underpinning this enquiry, I ask questions which relate to the concept of 'access', exploring how women entering the music industry tackle structural constraints to their professional, artistic and personal development. I also question the ways in which the structural inequalities in the music industry can be addressed through an artist's individual agency. Through my practice I explore the ways in which (publicly funded) arts organisations can support artists in navigating and reversing the gender gap in the (commercial) music industry. The reflections below consider these questions in relation to my methodological approach.

Feminist Methodologies

Fundamentally, as a feminist researcher, my methodology and practice have been guided by feminist theory. I have also been influenced by the principles of feminist research alongside ethical and methodological practices from the ethnographic

toolkit. This approach maps on to a culture of care, putting individual life stories at the heart of the research process and letting new and different voices be heard. McRobbie (1982), who was one of the first to address questions of experience and subjectivity, suggests that “Feminism forces us to locate our own autobiographies and our own experience inside the questions we might want to ask, so that we continually do *feel* with the women we are studying”. The need for a recognised feminist approach to research has been highlighted throughout different waves of feminism and a collective critique of sociology in what Dorothy Smith describes as a “failure to speak to the experiences of women, and (its) consequent inability to theorise comprehensively” (2005:5). Along with many other feminists, Smith’s rationale for this argument is that sociology has not viewed women’s concerns and experiences as authentic, but subjective, while men’s were seen as the basis for the production of ‘true’ knowledge. As a result, “sociological knowledge portrayed women as men saw them, not as they saw themselves – the objects rather than the subjects of the sociological imagination” (2005:5).

Informing this methodological approach is the work of Reinharz (1992) and Ribbens and Edwards (1998) whose explorations of the relationship between feminism and methodology theorise a number of key principles and perspectives for feminist research. Most relevant of the themes discussed by Reinharz and Ribbens and Edwards to my research are the areas of; connection and understanding, transdisciplinary research and social change as set out below.

Connection and Understanding

Feminist researchers utilise a multiplicity of methodologies but largely believe that qualitative research is essential in order to demonstrate an understanding of the broader challenges that surround women in society and fairly position their contribution in context. Within feminist methodologies it is widely accepted that the researcher is included as a person and, as I have shown, that “personal experience can be the very starting point of a study, the material from which the researcher develops questions, and the source for finding people to study” (Reinharz, 1992:260). Acknowledging that this violates the conventional expectation that the researcher be detached, objective and value neutral, Reinharz and Ribbens and

Edwards strongly consider personal experience to be a valuable asset recognising the value of this approach, Reinharz goes on to suggest that it enables us to “define our research questions, lead us to sources of useful data, gain the trust of others in doing the research and enable us to partially test our findings” (1992:259). I utilise this approach throughout the research process where it has enabled me to test and develop theories with regard to the gender gap I have experienced and observed whilst also informing the subsequent action that I have taken to address it. Using this methodology, I have also built personal connections and relationships of trust with my consenting research community of partners, practitioners and participants.

Transdisciplinary Research Practice

Reinharz suggests that most feminist research is aligned in its openness to being transdisciplinary. Whilst stating that this is an affinity rather than a necessity she states: “Feminists seem particularly drawn to work on the borders of, and outside their fields”, drawing out new boundaries which challenge traditional methodologies and extend across disciplinary boundaries to create “connected knowers” (1992:250). This aligns with the field of women’s studies, which critically considers cross-disciplinary contexts in order to “act upon our present” (1992:250.)

Sherif (1982) recognises the need for “cross-disciplinary inquiry and the coordination of findings from historical, sociocultural, political, economic, sociopsychological and bio-psychological analyses in the study of specific problems of human experience and action” (Sherif 1982 cited in Reinharz 1992:250). Picking up on the idea of ‘action’ the need for a transdisciplinary approach is evident in supporting the intentions of my research and practice as discussed in the literature review. The benefit in this context is the perspective engendered when boundaries, which have limited previous studies, are dissolved enabling a fuller picture of the complex and unequal gendered structures and systems to emerge. By examining these inequalities from specific perspectives, the biases and structures which operate on micro as well as macro levels can be identified comprehensively in terms of, for example, affect, individual agency and the somatic norm. Similarly, in my practice and as my analysis of setting up BSN goes on to explore there is a need for a more holistic approach to tackling inequality across the *landscape* of music and this

requires a move away from siloed working towards coordinated transdisciplinary collaborations.

Feminist Research and Social Change

Following on from the notion of collaborative interventions, Reinharz recognises that much feminist research is driven by a commitment, or close relationship with change-making. She states: “In addition to the connection with theory, much feminist research is connected to social change and social policy questions” (1992:251) she adds “For many feminists, research is obligated to contribute to social change through consciousness-raising or specific policy recommendations: (1992:251) and goes on to encourage feminist researchers to forge connections and make themselves useful to policy makers. This matches with my intentions for Both Sides Now as I go on to explore through the programme outline. This part of my research is underpinned by ‘change methods’ a variety of ‘whole systems’ change-making methodologies collated and suggested by practitioners Holman, Devane and Cady (2007). Within this compendium of literature, they highlight a series of methodological approaches which utilise “practical applications of social systems theory that engage the complexities of human behavior” (2007:7). In particular, I have engaged with Open Space Technology (founded by Owen, 1997) as a methodology that aligns with my overarching approach to this research as discussed in greater detail in the Change chapter.

Professional Practice

As briefly acknowledged, this thesis has been informed through practice-led research, an approach which aligns with my principles as a feminist researcher in its active positioning of the researcher and its openness and flexibility of approach.

Gray (1996) defines the two key aspects of practice-led research as:

Research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific

methods familiar to us as practitioners. (Gray 1996:3, cited in Smith and Dean, 2009:213).

This quote helps to rationalise my choice in undertaking a practice-based enquiry. As I have discussed the starting point of this enquiry was the experiences and observations of my practice and an initial supposition that there were underlying factors impacting on the under-representation of women in our programme. The second area that Gray highlights is the value of utilising practice-specific methodologies in order to pursue this examination. The culture and climate of my professional practice, as also discussed in the literature review, has necessitated the use of mixed methodologies to capture, evaluate and evidence the impact of Brighter Sound work. Throughout the thesis I utilised these tools, including observations, evaluations, reflections and conversations designed to hear and understand behaviours and attitudes concerned with the musicians' experiences. Alongside this research, I carried out in-depth interviews, in line with the standards of ethical research, with a small sample group of 7 participant practitioners. At the point of gaining informed consent for the interviews, all agreed to being named in this research. I considered this to be an important and inspiring act from the artists, who by speaking honestly and openly were paving the way for others to do so - inviting the opportunity to stop and consider the environments where they work and the actions, behaviours or expectations they experience. Throughout the thesis the importance of allies and collectives recur as important in the fight for equality and this show of experiential solidarity has the potential to reassure others that they are not alone.

All of the women I interviewed were socially engaged in discussions around gender equality and they had all participated in the BSN programme, either as guest artists or participants. In selecting these interviewees, I considered the power dynamics of the professional relationship I had formed with the interviewees and the potential impact of this on the interview process. In particular for participants who I had 'selected for an opportunity' or guest artists who, through Brighter Sound, I was engaging in paid work. To mitigate any potential biases and to protect the interviewees from any possible power imbalance, I kept the research conversations separate to any discussion about the BSN programme and ensured that all

interviews took place outside of project activity. This issue was further reduced through my chosen methodological approach where the emphasis was upon empowering the women, I interviewed by letting them talk about their work in their own words and using this as the basis for my analysis.

I took an auto/biographical approach using semi-structured interviews that allowed participants to share their perspectives and experiences within a relatively open framework. Through this process I gathered accounts of their working lives which provided valuable insights that formed the basis for wider discussions in relation to the two themes of 'access' and 'agency'. The women in the sample group had variances in age and experience, which led to diverse and interesting findings but also enabled me to identify the recurring themes that unify the sample.

From here I drew out the most important themes in order to examine how the women negotiated their gendered work environments collating a 'coda' of stories to further augment the thesis narrative. I use my reflections as a practitioner-researcher in tandem with this interview data to present an account and analysis of the learning generated through the practice.

Further recognition of the value of this practice-based approach in relation to my research comes from Sullivan (2009) who suggests "In its broadest sense, practice-led research is circumscribed by an equally important emphasis placed on the artist-practitioner, the creative product and the critical process. The locus of inquiry can begin at any of these three points. What is critical however, is the interdependence of these domains and the central role that making plays in the creation of knowledge" (Sullivan, 2009 cited in Smith and Dean, 2009). In the case of this thesis, the 'making' has been the development and delivery of the BSN initiative from the initial feasibility, scoping and fundraising, through the partnership development, to the facilitated 'open space' event contributions and conference content alongside the creative commissioning of new music, all grounded in an underlying commitment to create a change. Smith describes research-based practice as "new ways of modelling and externalising such knowledge while at the same time, revealing philosophical, social and cultural contexts for the critical intervention and application

of knowledge outcomes” (2009:3). This matches my aspiration to position the thesis portfolio as part of this lineage.

By working in this live context my research has been challenged and informed by ‘dynamic systems of complexity and emergence’ (2009:215) and the need to incorporate multiple perspectives into my writing. Recognising this, I have utilised reflexive methodologies alongside theoretical frameworks in order to fashion a coherent narrative of the multiple perspectives I bring. According to Smith and Dean, “The reflexive defines a position where the researcher can refer to and reflect upon themselves and so be able to give an account of their position of enunciation” (2009: 219). From the position of reflective practitioner-researcher, I have been able to bridge my professional practice with critical ways of knowing. I kept a reflective journal throughout the PhD research process, which provided an alternative lens from which to reflect on and make sense of my everyday experiences alongside the perspectives of participants and project partners. The methodological positioning has enabled me to consciously acknowledge the assumptions and preconceptions that I bring into this research as a musician, as a practitioner and as a theorist.

My reflections are sometimes relayed through auto-ethnographical vignettes or empirical observations as I consider the way I understand my practice through my own theoretical reflections and the methodology of the programme which has been influenced by my own choices and experiences. I also use a more critical voice when adopting my position of researcher. Throughout the thesis, these multiple perspectives and voices have been both necessary and important in collating what Heidegger refers to as praxical knowledge: “the material basis of knowledge (which) provides a philosophical framework for understanding the acquisition of human knowledge as emergent. Ideas and theories that are the result of practice” (2009:78). At times I want to construct tangible recommendations where individual and organisational practices need to change. I also want to convey the frustrations and ‘wise anger’ that I have felt negotiating tensions where I encounter sexist and misogynistic practice. Wise Anger is a concept developed by Woodward (2003), whose research looks at ‘older women as troublesome’ and considers the ‘gendering practices that produce irritated women’. I balance this with the glimmers of hope and encouragement that I encounter.

Examples of my practice are interspersed throughout this thesis and are included to demonstrate the personal decisions, processes and insights I have experienced along with the gender-political and geo-political contexts that situate this research. Whilst the focus of my practice is the North of England my research extends to a national perspective. I also evidence the resources, recommendations and models of practice that I have developed and adapted for BSN as a contribution to a strategy for change. Finally, I explore the challenges, negotiations and successes I have encountered through reflexive writing alongside BSN ephemera and the development of a manifesto for change.

Introducing the Practice: Both Sides Now Programme Overview

The funding for the Both Sides Now initiative was confirmed in July 2017 through a grant from the Arts Council England's (ACE) Ambition for Excellence¹⁷ scheme (application [here](#)). The funding was for a three-year¹⁸ intervention to support young and early-career female musicians from across the North of England with a particular focus on Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and the surrounding areas¹⁹. The grant is worth £595,000 with an additional £200,000 in kind or cash match funding. The programme activity was developed to reflect the journey of a musician from education level through to early stage professional career and is outlined in greater detail below.

In developing the programme, as discussed, I considered music to be a 'landscape' rather than one defined by the traditional silos of education and industry. This felt important as working independently of these two silos, in an arts charity, I have always been aware of the lack of dialogue between education and the commercial industry and the lack of holistic thought about music at policy level. In further developing this concept of a music landscape, I brought together a consortium of key partners, including artists, industry professionals, venues, membership bodies and

¹⁷ 'Ambition for excellence is aimed at stimulating and supporting ambition, talent and excellence across the arts sector in England. This is a rolling programme, from 28 May 2015 to 27 October 2017. We will receive applications in two stages: an expression of interest followed by an invitation to apply.' (Arts Council England website).

¹⁸ The initiative was originally planned to run until July 2020 but due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic we were able to agree an extension with ACE to September 2021. The programme has accompanied the duration of my thesis writing.

¹⁹ The full application is included as Appendix A in the practice portfolio

record labels. A full list of project partners and stakeholders is presented [here](#) and [here](#). In developing this project proposal, I adopted and aligned a strategic approach to addressing this issue and outlined initial areas of collaboration that would ensure authenticity, relevance and local impact. The network of partners enables national and international collaboration, connection, exchanges, skills sharing and networking for organisations and participants.

Programme Outline

Both Sides Now - A Theory of Change

I structured the proposal for Both Sides Now (BSN) with the pillars of Access, Agency and Change, a conceptual framework that contextualised what I saw as a pathway to creating change. It was theoretically based on the Kirkpatrick (1978) model of evaluation. The Kirkpatrick model is predominantly an evaluation tool and is structured to illustrate the connections between inputs and outcomes. I augment these levels of learning with Giddens' (1984) structuration theory to show inputs and outputs on what Giddens describes as the macro, mezzo and micro levels, which equate to the social, organisational and individual areas of the music landscape that I am concerned with. Giddens' views on structures, systems and institutions are closely tied in with his idea of 'agency' as they are all part of the duality of structure and this correlates with my approach to structuring and developing BSN. Extending this in relation to gender, Ridgeway and Correll (2004) suggest that "gender is a multilevel system of difference and inequality" which "involves cultural beliefs and distribution of resources at the macro level, patterns of behaviour and organisational practices at the interactional [mezzo] level and selves and identity at the individual level [micro]" (2004:510–511). Applying this to my theory, the micro level change is based on the hypothesis that in order to create change we needed to create greater access to musical development opportunities for young, female musicians and greater awareness and connection to female 'role models'. At a mezzo level my theory understands that female artists need greater agency within their career and proposes a creative intervention to improve the conditions for women to explore and experiment, as in the BSN residency model. The underpinning activism of the

programme aims to make visible the multiple dimensions, practices and processes of gender inequalities, working alongside these micro and mezzo levels of resistance to contribute to macro level change. The Theory of Change model can be found [here](#)

Project Structure: Access, Agency and Change

I have organised this thesis around the Both Sides Now framework with the three main chapters mirroring the conceptual building blocks of Access, Agency and Change. Each chapter demonstrates the application of the Theory of Change and cumulatively builds on the context of the previous chapter, developing the discourse around my practice and emerging research themes. The approach I define in this thesis emerges from the professional frames through which my enquiry is pursued and the way in which I understand feminist affirmative action in practice. Collectively, these topics unite throughout these interlocking chapters to explore subtle, new and missing narratives for what needs to change and how. The section below maps out the different elements of project activity alongside the three correlating strands of my investigation.

1. Access Strand - Project Description

This strand of the programme focuses on education as the entry point for most people's first engagement with music. The concept for this strand of work was designed to disrupt the male dominance of music making both inside and outside formal education, and has been delivered with schools, Music Education Hubs (MEHs) and Charanga, a company that develops music teaching and learning platforms. I introduce these partners in more detail in the Access chapter. The aim of this strand of work was to create a range of accessible resources and opportunities for young women interested in exploring different ways of music making and opening up possible new spaces for that work.

The key delivery outputs in relation to this theme are:

A) Digital Resource.

The focal point of the Access strand of BSN is the development of a new curriculum resource offered as part of the Charanga school curriculum which is used in 70% of primary schools and 55% of secondary schools nationally reaching 1.25 million children.

The resource is made up of two units of work - Unit 1: "Music and Me" a six-week unit of work that sits within the Musical School Scheme in Year 6 specifically, and Unit 2: a more flexible transition unit aimed at ages 12-14 (KS3). Both units were designed to embed and normalise the important and inspirational role women have in the music industry. The children (aged 9–14/Upper KS2–KS3) learn about and understand some of the ways that inspirational women in the music industry express their own identity in the music they create and perform. With lesson plans, assessments and interactive resources for every lesson, it supports all of the requirements of the national curriculum.

The units feature interviews, source material and the music of inspirational women artists who have worked on BSN. As well as the featured artists there is a database of 100 inspirational women and gender minority musicians throughout history, across the globe and working across all genres who have made important contributions to music.

Links to access and explore the resource can be found over five slides from [here](#)
This is analysed in greater detail in chapter one.

B) Workshops and Residencies.

Alongside the digital resource the project includes a series of practical, all-female music workshops in each city (Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle). These activities create opportunities for young female artists to explore their creativity, meet and collaborate with like-minded people and experiment with new approaches to music making. While these are not actively explored in the Access chapter examples can be found [here](#)

2. Agency Strand Project Description

This part of the programme focuses on talent development for female musicians, creating and connecting participants with professional development opportunities and supporting the formation of networks and collectives.

A) Artistic Residencies. A series of week-long, creative development residencies is delivered by internationally established female artists. Each city has one residency per year. The residencies accommodate up to 15 emerging musicians recruited through an open call out. The week-long process enables the musicians to test ideas, experiment, progress creatively and gain a deeper understanding of their next steps, strategies and point of impact on the industry.

B) International Commission. Following the publication of a creative brief we select a commissioned artist through a region-wide open call. The successful artist was paired with a European counterpart (recruited through international partner networks) and the two artists embarked on a 6-month process of collaboration to create and perform entirely new work. The pair were mentored by a guest artist, and an appropriate performance platform was created in the UK and on an international stage

The residencies are analysed in greater detail in chapter two, project film and photography can be accessed [here](#)

3. Change Strand – Project Description

A) Showcasing Working with venue and festival partners to programme and produce showcase events for participants of the programme examples [here](#). This strand works to increase the visibility of female artists and to connect the artists with professional opportunities.

B) Open Space Events. The Open Space series was delivered in the first year of BSN with one event taking place in each city. These events were

conceptualised to get a broad understanding of the many and complex issues that exist in this industry and to collaboratively explore what needs to change.

C) Manifesto. Throughout the duration of the programme, from the Open Space events and through each residency, commission and interaction with participants, I have collected and analysed the change-focussed data. This data has informed a crowd-sourced manifesto. The focus of the manifesto is to draw these key, recurring themes together and unify them. In order to have a long-lasting and meaningful impact on the gender gap in the music industry, I presented my findings to the Culture Committee at the European Parliament in Brussels in October 2019.

Chapter Plan and Thesis Structure

The following overview of the structure and content of the thesis structure aims to guide the reader through this field of work, illustrating the interwoven relationship between the practice and research. It clarifies how the practice outputs outlined above interact with the theory to build a critical discourse and framework for this investigation.

The thesis consists of this introduction, three main chapters and a conclusion, alongside an accompanying practice-based portfolio. The Digital Portfolio is an online submission which comprises materials that document and reveal the practice of making and shaping the Both Sides Now programme on which the condensed critical reflection in the main body of the thesis is based. It links to documentation including the Both Sides Now application and Theory of Change model, partner information, reflections on the practice, resources and project ephemera, the BSN Manifesto and an accompanying thick description of my experience taking the Manifesto to the European Parliament in October 2019.

Access Chapter

In relation to this area of my practice, the main aim of this chapter is to explore the extent to which gender impacts on musicians at the very start of their vocational pathway. I draw on several kinds of evidence to better understand career entry

opportunities for female musicians and to interpret the range of issues they face at this stage. I base this on the work of Eisentraut's *The Accessibility of Music* (2013) and utilise his 'levels of access' as a framework to explore the gender-based barriers from a physical, personal and participatory perspective. Alongside this I also draw from the work of Spender (1982) and Smith (1987) whose feminist critiques of educational practices highlight barriers for young women.

These perspectives are synthesised with the work of feminist theorists including Butler (1990), who introduces the concept of gender as a cultural construction, and Fraser (1989, 2013, 2016), who develops the correlating theme of women's social and cultural exclusion, both of which stem from the public and private spheres of early patriarchal societies. This research provides a useful framework to analyse and interpret the contemporary issues that I am unpicking through my own research and professional practice.

I focus on the theme of education as the most significant point of first access to music, tracing the early origins of socially constructed barriers and opening up a discussion about the absence of formal gender bias but the persistence of educational segregation. Reflecting on the early social and cultural patterns alongside more contemporary evidence, I explore the intrinsic and extrinsic factors including personal ambition, societal attitudes and institutional structures that are still active in creating a contemporary situation reinforced by a historical ideology. This leads into an analysis of the development and decision making of the BSN curriculum resource and I conclude the chapter by drawing together these key concerns, exploring the role of my own practice as an intervention to the gendering of early musical engagement.

Agency Chapter

In alignment with my practice, I consider Agency as the phase of an artist's career trajectory where they begin to develop an increased awareness about their personal working practices and decision-making processes, along with those of the broader music industry. The Agency chapter is structured in three sections drawing on my own professional practice alongside interview data and the theories of feminist and

sociological scholars such as Foucault (1976), Abbott et al. (1990), Butler (1990), McNay (1992, 2000) and Ahmed (2017). Initially I extend the discussion from chapter one to focus on a primary line of enquiry which explores the range of strategies that artists use as they try to progress in their professional career through both resisting and incorporating dominant discourses. I examine the ways in which this approach poses challenges to their agency, their career priorities and their personal and professional identities. The implications for this questioning pave the way to explore the strategies of identity formation and self-organisation that women in the music industry adopt in order to define and defend their own boundaries.

Underpinning this exploration is a theoretical framework which examines the evolving relationship between agency and feminist theory. I revisit the work of Abbot et al(1990), Butler (1990) and Fraser (1989), who have been keen to move away from the oversimplification of 'malestream' theories serving as an ideological justification for the subordinate position of women. Abbot et al suggest that the dominance of these ideologies has made it easier "to present male ideas as natural and universal because it is produced and reproduced by those in positions of relative power"(1990:39), while Fraser argues that shifting identity politics can allow society to "move away from the role of social structures in constricting men and women into a relatively narrow range of gender roles, but also their capacity to exercise agency" (1989:56). These perspectives align with the discourse developing through my primary research, which explores female (rather than male) ideologies as measures of success. It also correlates with the work of McNay, who argues for "the need for a more substantive account of agency to be introduced into ideas of gender identity" (2000:10), reassessing social theories against contemporary societal change and strategies towards equality. In alignment with this my interview research introduces the themes of learned and inherited behaviours alongside the recurrent issues from the Access chapter (power, discrimination, permission and legitimacy): these themes are reintroduced and developed in the context of my professional practice with a focus on the BSN residency model. The final analysis of this chapter explores the setting up of an alternative, all-female 'safe space' where BSN artists and participants are encouraged to explore and experiment their artistic agency.

Change Chapter

The findings of the Change chapter are central to the arguments presented in the written thesis and the potential implications in terms of advancing gender equality in music. This chapter is split into three segments. The first section discusses the methodological approach of the Open Space and conference strands of the BSN programme bringing together the voices of hundreds of musicians from across the North. The discussion which is rooted in affective embodied experiences provides valuable insight into specific causes of direct and indirect, intentional and unintentional discrimination in the music industry. This is critically analysed as a mode of feminist organising using what Hemmings (2012) refers to as 'affective solidarity'.

In section two, I develop this narrative to articulate the transition from feminist organising into manifesto making, drawing on the work of Ebert (2003) Ahmed (2018) and Fahs (2020) to create the Both Sides Now Manifesto. The Manifesto covers five main themes: education, artistic development, live music, parenthood and leadership.

The chapter closes with a broader analysis of the themes from the Manifesto contextualised alongside the typology of female-focussed initiatives. Uniting these three areas, I discuss a series of practical pledges developed with the intention to raise consciousness and move the learning from my practice into the arena of policy making.

Conclusion Chapter

The Conclusion offers a reflective overview of each chapter and draws together the key themes of the investigation. I evaluate the findings, strengths and limitations of the study in relation to my overarching aims and methodological approach.

Taken together, the combination of practice and research contributes new, critical insights into the discourse on gender equality in music. The thesis offers a feminist narrative about what needs to change and why, alongside a body of work including practical strategies for change-making. It will be relevant to researchers of gender equality, creative 'diversity' practitioners, and representatives of the music industry who want to make change.

Language and Terminology

As the introduction has established, feminist ideology does not correspond to one single unitary perspective or a particular political stance and is arguably better thought of (similarly to the definition of music industry) in the plural of feminisms, recognising the complex production of inequality in relation to gender. This thesis aspires to be respectful of this complexity and understands feminism as a dynamic and responsive ideology. As such it does not set out to give precedence to a particular mode of doing or being feminist. Rather it aligns with the notion of Rivers (2017) in attempting to “resist essentialism and universalizing, in order to adapt to women’s ever-changing experiences and a continually shifting political landscape” (2017:42). This approach is further underpinned by the work of Hemmings (2012) and her re-reading of the feminist politics of transformation, shifting from an empathetic identity-based engagement to a more inclusive model of ‘affective dissonance’. These perspectives are present throughout the thesis.

Similarly, I recognise the issue of the use of binary definitions of gender which fail to account for biological, social and cultural difference. I am also conscious that the terminology in this thesis predominantly reflects cis-gendered women but, in alignment with my practice, this is written from an inclusive perspective, recognising cis and trans women as well as non-binary people who are comfortable in a space that focuses on the experiences of women.

Finally, and for the purpose of clarity when using the term ‘music industry’ it is important to acknowledge the different areas that this includes. Williamsom and Cloonan (2007) challenge the notion of a single music industry arguing that it “suggests simplicity where there is complexity” (2007:305). They propose that the term music industry is largely synonymous with the recording industry however, they highlight that when it comes to policy making the DCMS regards the industry to be comprised of eight different groupings including: “composers; producers; managers; music publishers; artists; concert recording, live music, publishing, and artists and composers as distinct sectors” (2007:310). They go on to suggest that a more appropriate way of understanding the multiple economic and political operational models within the industry, is, similarly to feminism, to use the term ‘music industries’

(plural)” (2007:305). In this thesis, my primary consideration is the artists and composers, but I also explore the inter-related industries of recorded music, live music, music management and publishing. The complexity that surrounds these different perspectives mirrors the complexity of inequality that I go on to examine.

Chapter One Access: Creating Space in the Classroom Curriculum and Canon

Introduction

This chapter explores the barriers and inequalities that impact girls and young women during the formative stages of their personal and musical development. Conceptually, this exploration is framed through the lens of *access*, in alignment with the structure and objectives of BSN. Selecting the concept of *access* was in part intuitive, informed by the fact that I have worked in a culture of inclusive music-making over the last fifteen years, but in practice the selection and use of this word has greater depth and meaning. To access something is to enter into it; in the case of *Both Sides Now* *access* is the first phase of the programme, working with girls and young women who are looking to access a vocational pathway into music. Access is also a way of opening up this exploration into the gender gap in music, a starting point to my investigation and the first step towards creating change.

The multiple discourses that surround the concept of *access* are broad and varied, as politically and societally we have become more aware of the exclusivity of everyday life. Language, policies, processes and practices are constantly evolving in an attempt to tackle some of our deepest inequalities. According to MacCabe and Yanacek (2018), there has been a substantial increase in the use of the word *access* over the last fifty years, with the term frequently addressing issues related to disability and to developments in the digital world, where use of the term has become “intertwined with a set of political debates in which access is interpreted as an important right” (2018:4). They go on to suggest that “much of access’s importance in the past fifty years is its ability to switch between very concrete meanings and very vague ones. Thus, access can refer to a physical point of entry or to its digital equivalent, but it can also imply a set of rights or privileges that come with this entry” (ibid.). Although policy and legislation have helped to remove societal barriers to certain human rights, there remain a substantial number of issues which have yet to be uncovered, targeted or tackled, many of which relate to gender. The discourse that surrounds the concept of *access* is neither solitary nor static: it interacts with theories from a range of disciplines. In the context of feminist studies, the notion of women seeking *access* reinforces their discursive constitution as

'outsiders' to the male arena of privilege. In relation to my practice it is not uncommon to see the term used in Arts Council or Youth Music guidance to encourage a more inclusive approach to arts participation, as outlined in the introduction. There also exists a dichotomy between access and excellence within arts management and cultural policy, which has been widely discussed (O'Brien, 2013; O'Brien and Oakley, 2015; Hesmondhalgh et al., 2015; Bull, 2019). These are all themes which this chapter explores.

Grounding my investigation is the framework of Eisentraut's theory of Musical Accessibility, which I use as a basis from which to critically analyse the gender-based barriers to music. Eisentraut's book *The Accessibility of Music* (2012) interrogates the multiplicity of ways in which access can be defined and applied in musical contexts, with a particular interest in the adoption of culture. He measures accessibility on three levels – the physical, the personal and the participatory – and presents these different levels as being "intimately connected and interdependent" (2012:18). The dynamism and fluidity which Eisentraut recognises between these levels of access resonate with my own investigation. The narratives this chapter explores are not discrete and there is not always a linear correlation between them but through this analysis I seek to identify the interconnected, culturally persistent associations that young women face as they first access music.

I begin by addressing the 'physical' level of access, exploring consumption and consumerism in young female music listeners. This analysis establishes an understanding of the foundations from which girls and young women form their first connection with music and examines the way in which pop music serves as a vehicle for communicating gendered messages and ideologies. This theme is developed through the second level of 'personal' access, which broadens the discussion of the varied modes and dominant narratives of influence during this critical period of maturation. The analysis focuses predominantly on two main sites of influence. First, I explore the concept of identity formation and youth culture in relation to popular music, drawing on the work of Steward and Garratt (1984), McRobbie (1991) and Frith (1996). My focus then turns to the issue of gender and access in the context of music education, drawing primarily from the work of sociologists Smith (1987, 1992) and Spender (1982) and musicologists Bull (2019) and Green (1997, 2008), whose

perspectives combine to highlight the ways in which “education and learning has been used to structure and support male supremacy” (Spender, 1982:12). In the final part of the chapter I consider Eisentraut’s third level of ‘participatory’ access in the context of other forms of education.

Collectively, these theorisations around access then lead into a critical reflection of my practice within BSN: a strategy for change in the form of a digital resource for classroom teaching featuring ten units of curriculum-compliant learning for classroom teaching in primary and secondary schools. The primary aim of the chapter as a whole is to identify and highlight the gendered inequalities that young women encounter in their early access to music and to engender a discussion around the strategies for change which my practice presents.

Level 1: Physical Access

The first level of access which Eisentraut outlines is physical access, described as the “physical contact between music and listener” (2012:21). Eisentraut describes the four main features of this level at its most basic as being able to “Find, Hear, Afford and Gain physical access to” (2013:28). How one might first ‘find’ music is largely influenced by familial, cultural and social situations but these early interactions can spark lasting associations that accompany a young person into and throughout adulthood.

According to the research of Christenson and DeBenedittis (1986) into children’s use of radio, it is around the age of nine children begin to prefer popular music over other genres. A more recent analysis by Stephens-Davidowitz (2018) correlated the most popular songs on the digital music streaming service Spotify with the ages of the Spotify subscribers who most commonly stream them. The findings suggested that the most important period of musical listening for women is between 11 and 14. The study also found that childhood influences were stronger for women than men, and overarchingly adolescence is a key time for shaping musical taste. It is also suggested that more mainstream subgenres like pop are most commonly associated with girls (DeNora, 2000). My research interest in this area relates to the early relationship that girls and young women form with music and the connections

and assumptions that they begin to form as a result of this physical access. My analysis is presented in three sections relating to musical consumption: the first reiterates the issue of low statistical representation of female artists in pop music, the second offers an analysis of the critical malignancy associated with teen listening habits and the third proposes a feminist critique of the issues associated with teen marketing.

To address these points in turn I first look at female representation within pop music. Since the 1970s feminists from a variety of disciplines have upheld a sustained criticism of the role of popular culture in socially constructing gendered stereotypes. The most prevalent critiques pertain to female representation either being overtly sexualised or heavily domesticised. According to Hargreaves (1984), the most widely hypothesized theories on the formation of musical preferences and taste suggest that “repeated exposure to a particular piece, or style of music increases the liking for that music” (Bartlett, 1973; Bradly, 1971, Getz, 1996; Hengartner and Hall, 1974 cited in Hargreaves, 1984). This implies that you like what you hear, the music you are exposed to. Hargreaves goes on to say that this means that “musical preference is influenced by salient variables identified by social learning theory, adolescent peers and authority figures” (1984: 36). This suggests that there are two key traits that summarise young people’s habits: repetition and social reinforcement. In the context of gender equality, the pattern of repetition and social reinforcement is problematic in that there is a far lower supply of music produced by women than by men.

As referenced in the introduction, women are statistically underrepresented in all areas of the music industry and are limited by the conventions of pop music, where the stereotypical ‘type’ of female performer is mostly shaped by cultural constructions of femininity and primarily limited to two areas of production, singer (sometimes singer-songwriter) and solo instrumentalist. I deepen my analysis of this particular issue in the section on personal access. The issue of underrepresentation is a crucial factor in the discourse surrounding ‘women in music’, which upholds the profession as an arena where women have gained entry but remain underrepresented, suggesting that there are further barriers beyond the issue of access.

In addition to the issue of low statistical representation, there are concerns relating to the subject matter and lyrical content of the music that young women are exposed to, particularly as Anglo-American pop music is predominantly written by men with lyrical messaging that frequently upholds high levels of sexualisation, gendered stereotyping and misogynistic attitudes toward women. The social significance of lyrical content has been analysed through the work of Carpentier (2014) and Wright and Qureshi (2015) regarding relationships and sexual behaviours and by van Oosten et al.(2015) about misogynistic beliefs. Bretthauer et al (2007) analysed and categorised the lyrical content of pop music into six recurring themes: “men and power, sex as top priority for males, objectification of women, sexual violence, women defined by having a man, and women as not valuing themselves” (2007:18).

These studies indicate that messages in popular music negatively influence listeners' perceptions of and interactions with women and this is particularly harmful for young audiences at a critical time in their development. They highlight the challenges for female representation that lie not only in their visibility as performers but also within their portrayal and positioning lyrically. An example of this was the 2013 single 'Blurred Lines', a collaboration between Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke. The song was banned from a range of institutions in the UK, including many Student Unions who cited the content as misogynistic and encouraging of date rape (Lynskey, 2013). Despite this controversial lyrical content (and an equally derogatory video to accompany the song), the song placed number one in the UK charts for five weeks. This song will have been sung in the playground by young girls and boys. The messages that such songs are sending out about gender and relationships is deeply misogynistic and problematic in the struggle for greater gender equity in the future, both within and outside of popular music.

Concomitant to the issue associated with the visibility and portrayal of women as analysed above, further societal criticism is levelled at the consumption habits of teenage girls, whose preferred genres are generally perceived to have lower cultural value than other music genres. Frith (1996) highlights that “the marker of ‘teenybop’ and ‘boy bands’ are taken far less seriously than more male genres” (1996: 86) in what he regards as a hierarchy of genres. Spraklen (2014) highlights the division between the playful young female pop music audience and the seriousness of male

rock culture, suggesting that “cultural hierarchies and boundaries are not just a matter of the division between popular and elite cultural forms, these boundaries manifest themselves in the status of genres such as folk or metal” (Spraklen, 2014 cited in O’Brien and Oakley, 2015). This suggested social ordering between genres and their fans can contribute to the way we understand our musical identity. Garratt (1984) suggests that historically male consumers have been valued as the more ‘serious’ fans, while Maalsen and McLean (2017) agree that consumption, particularly the process of record collecting, has predominantly been a male domain, which constructs another barrier for women to pass in order to be taken seriously as music fans.

However, the digitisation of music has increased accessibility from the perspective of producers and consumers. Musicians have direct access to global audiences without leaving their home and audiences have easy access to almost every piece of music that has ever been recorded. Music has consequently become more affordable and music discovery platforms such as Spotify, Bandcamp and Last FM offer curated playlists and recommendations based on mood, occasion, and in relation to previous stylistic choices the listener has made. Statistical data published by Spotify suggest a more gender-equal market as a space for consumption and distribution, with 43.3% female listenership but still only 22.1% of streams from female or mixed-gender artists (Spotify, 2019), reemphasising the limited level of female production.

Reflecting on her own experience of following pop music as a teen, Garratt describes how the term ‘fans’ is used in a derogatory sense when referencing teenage audiences whose interests and expectations are often assumed to be less about the music and more about the artist’s image. The separation of teen girl culture as less serious or important than other genres is an additional challenge to the musical growth of young women, discounting and devaluing their taste. However, Garratt’s analysis stresses that fan culture is often about more than just the listening and more about “the desire for comradeship”. She highlights the significance of being part of a large crowd that is predominantly female, suggesting that at these events many girls “were experiencing mass power for the first and last time” (1984:144). Alongside the pleasure offered by musical experiences, the music provides the girls with a means of negotiating, representing and constituting their place in the world. As McClary

(1993) suggests, “it isn’t *just* a commodity but is also a public medium that helps shape our notions of the self, gender, desire, pleasure, the body and much more”(1993:404).

Beyond the social side of music making, the economic contribution that teenage fans make to the industry has also come to be of greater significance not only to music media but also to feminist theorists who have raised concerns over the increase in the commercialisation and sexualisation of teen markets. The issues of gender stereotyping and age-inappropriate products and behaviours have been the subject of scrutiny at policy level and in the work of feminist theorists. This concern relates to commercialism and childhood; however, the issues tend to be steered towards girls and young women, who are considered to be more ‘at risk’. The relationship between sexualisation, commerce and gender is part of a long-running feminist discourse that criticises the portrayal of women as objects of desire within the music industry. This early exposure to femininity through the lens of mass media has come under extensive criticism from feminist theorists such as Wolf (1990), who describes how femininity has become a ‘visual identity’ repeatedly constructed and represented through the imagery of popular culture in films, magazines and music videos. McRobbie (1991) highlights that young women are seen as consumers of culture and whilst not necessarily purely passively or without agency, can be frequently targeted and influenced by the social constructs of gender as played out in popular culture and mass media.

Cohen (2001) suggests that rock and pop performers construct social and sexual scripts by conveying conventions of expectations for the behaviour of men and women and sexuality. She claims that popular music performers who are men tend to portray masculinity and dominance, while women performers portray images of glamour. These social scripts, although stereotypical, are adopted and reproduced by music consumers. Much of the rhetoric surrounding this issue has less to do with the economic value of music and more to do with its ‘soft power’, which is still controlled by white, middleclass men. This male domination upholds the production of female imagery that men desire an area of analysis that is developed further in the second chapter of this thesis.

This section on physical access has highlighted some of the foundational concerns relating to the early interactions between young women and pop music. There are a number of themes which develop throughout the chapter alongside the effects from levels of personal and participatory access. Taken together, these themes indicate that messages contained in music lyrics and accompanying visual imagery of music content have been found to largely objectify, sexually exploit, and degrade women. These early associations signify expectations, values and ideals which young women absorb consciously or subconsciously. Cumulatively, the discourses they create undermine women's access as both producers and consumers of music who lack the ability or heritage to fully inscribe their position in this professional arena.

Level 2: Personal Reception

Eisentraut's second level of access refers to personal reception, the way that people are able to connect on a meaningful or emotional level with music. Eisentraut uses concepts such as "interpret, enjoy, tolerate, have significant / positive associations with or have a use for" (2013:28) as examples of the way that this level of engagement can be manifest. For some people this might be the totality of their musical interaction, but for others this is the next step on a journey which translates a passion into a vocation. This second, interconnected level of access bridges the transition between musical discovery (physical) and musical participation, where a person becomes actively involved in music making. This is a critical step in the journey of a young musician. This next section explores the part played by the personal relationships that everyday musical interactions can represent in the process of identity formation for young, female musicians.

Because of the personal nature of this level of access, each experience will be unique – for example, how a particular lyric might elicit an important memory or how a particular chord progression can evoke a mood or feeling, all of which would be hard to capture or qualify. For this reason, I tackle some of the broader themes that connect to personal reception, focussing on experiences that are shared and are to some extent uniform: popular music and curriculum-based music education. First, I extend the discussion relating to teenage fan culture and the relationship between identity formation and popular music. I then move on to examine the

gendering of institutional learning as a key site of influence for young women, examining the content and curriculum in music education. This provides the basis for a critical analysis of the first of my practice interventions, the development of an alternative resource for classroom teaching, which is presented at the end of the chapter.

Identity Formation and Gender Boundaries in Pop Music

While identity formation is something that we are consciously and subconsciously refining throughout our development, according to Erikson's (1968) Stages of Psychosocial Development this gains greater prominence during adolescence. I reference Erikson as he was the first theorist to enquire seriously into the experience of identity formation during adolescence and to recognise the multiple modes of influence which are at work during this critical period in a young person's development. Erikson states: "Faced with physical growth, sexual maturation, and impending career choices, adolescents must accomplish the task of integrating their prior experiences and characteristics into a stable identity" (1968:8). Erikson later suggests that "identity depends upon the past and determines the future; rooted in childhood, it serves as a base from which to meet later life tasks" (Erikson 1970, cited in Kroger 2006). This is particularly applicable to the focus of this chapter, which examines the early influences which inform the process of identity formation. Developing Erikson's theory, Kroger (2006) presents a more contemporary analysis of identity research within this framework. She discusses the significance of individual and social interactions, which relate to "the ability to generate possible future selves and a readiness for change", as "key elements in the identity exploration process" (2006:39). More specifically in relation to gender in identity, Kroger suggests that gender-role orientation is of more significance than gender itself. This implies that a person makes choices about how they should act based on their inherent understanding of gender and what behaviours this may deny or permit.

Relating this to popular culture, the process of 'cultivation theory' addresses the impact of mediated reality on attitudes, beliefs and roles, suggesting that "as individuals are increasingly exposed to a particular media message or perspective their individual perceptions are subtly 'cultivated' toward the likelihood that such

messages or perspectives will be representative of reality” (2006:18). Leading on from cultivation theory is what Zurbriggen et al. (2007) describe as cultural spill-over theory. This theory proposes that the more a society tends to legitimise a behaviour for which there is widespread cultural approval, the greater the likelihood that behaviour will ‘spillover’ into other aspects of social life. This theory argues that behaviours which have been accepted in one context become justifiable in other contexts. For example, when women present sexually or are objectified in music videos, the ‘spillover effect’ will justify the objectification of women in other contexts.

The cultural ideal as to what it means to be female still centres strongly around physical image as object of desire or positioned within the domestic sphere. This positioning is the basis of a long-running feminist discourse which originates from the writing of Simone De Beauvoir (1947). De Beauvoir advances the argument that men fundamentally oppress women by positioning them, on every level, as ‘other’. Through De Beauvoir’s historical, biological and psycho-social analysis, she highlights that there are no ‘essential’ differences between men and women to account for this perceived inferiority, rather a set of repetitive, ritualistic representations of women which have become engrained within the human consciousness. In the case of popular culture, Fenton (2001) suggests that “the idea is that popular cultural signs and media images increasingly dominate our sense of reality and the way we define ourselves and the world around us” (2001:109). For teenage girls this could include social associations and connections formed as consumers of pop music through magazines, the internet and in friendship groups, and then the way these are internalised, adopted and acted out in a musical context. Applying De Beauvoir’s theory to women’s position in music, the otherness manifests in women as ‘objects’ rather than ‘subjects’ and, while De Beauvoir does not suggest that women are entirely passive in this construction, it is a position that they are forced into through social discipline.

Music and Young Identity

Music can be seen as an important identity marker for young women, as my analysis of female consumption set out. A key function of this relationship can be understood as fulfilling the essential requirement for adolescent youths to ‘fit in’. Thorne (1993)

suggests: “It is during the transition from ‘child’ to ‘teen’ that girls start negotiating the forces of adult femininity, a set of structures and meanings that more fully inscribe their subordination on the basis of gender” (1993:84). It is through the passive and active encounters with music that young people learn and inherit behaviours, make meanings and often choose to conform to social ideologies in order to fit in.

Frith (1996) theorises “popular music is popular not because it reflects something or authentically articulates some sort of popular taste or experience, but because it creates our understanding of what ‘popularity’ is, because it places us in the social world in a particular way” (1996:85). He goes on to state: “the experience of pop music is an experience of identity: in responding to a song, we are drawn, haphazardly, into emotional alliances with the performers and with the performers’ other fans” (1996:86). Considering an affiliation with pop music as an assertion of popularity, Frith emphasises the power of the messaging that surrounds a musical ‘product’ to reproduce a certain ideological type of femininity.

While it is not so straightforward as to say that young girls mindlessly conform to stereotypical listening and performance practices by modelling behaviours that conform to this ideology, young women can be understood to (again) choose to subscribe to this ideal type, rather than to be considered ‘unpopular’ or ‘alternative’. This issue has been widely critiqued by a range of feminist musicologists including Burns and LaFrance (2002), Leonard (2007), McClary (1993), O’Brien, L (2012) and Whiteley (1997, 2000), all of whom tackle the theoretical issues which surround gender, identity and the role of music. While focussing on a variety of musical periods and genres, recurrent themes pervade as to the *marginal* or image-driven *material* ‘repressive representations’ (Whiteley, 2000:18). In popular music, which, as McRobbie suggests, we know culturally to be more closely associated with teenage girls, the limited representation of women funnelled through male-centred practices and visual ideologies has more to do with beauty and body image than the quality and originality of their work. Burns and LaFrance conceptualise the issue of female identity in popular music as being ‘inextricably linked to the sociocultural processes of its construction and, subsequently, the agential possibilities and constraints introduced through that construction’ (2002:10). Leonard is concerned with the extent to which “these constructions rely on a narrow set of archetypes and

how these public images are gendered” (1997:65). This criticism has been used to examine the impact of pop acts such as the Spice Girls, who were constructed by an artist management company. Whiteley (2000) and O’Brien (2012) analyse their success against their position as role models, highlighting that despite the criticism they faced for their artistic limitations and lack of integrity around their ‘girl power’ brand of feminism, “they appealed to young girls who were brand-aware enough to become a consumer group in their own right: dubbed *tweenagers*, this sophisticated, fashion-conscious group of ten-to-thirteen-year-olds flocked to the High Street to buy Spice Girl boob tubes and leopard-skin jumpsuits” (2012: 370). This analysis suggests that while the Spice Girls were commercially successful, their success is in part indicative of their visual image and brand endorsements rather than their music, implying that how a pop star looks and what they wear is of equal if not greater importance than how they sound.

While gains have been made, and continue to be made, with regard to the increase and diversification of female artists, these have been counter-balanced by the ‘backlash’ of a more extreme deployment of the female body as an object of desire. In 2013, in alignment with a resurgent feminist movement, a public debate was ignited when two established female artists, Sinéad O’Connor and Annie Lennox, made public comments in the form of an open letter (O’Connor, 2013) and a Facebook post (Lennox) to raise concern about the ‘hyper sexualisation’ of female artists in music videos. O’Connor’s open letter was to Miley Cyrus, who appears “naked and licking sledgehammers” in her video for the single *Wrecking Ball*. O’Connor’s comments warn her of the harm that she is doing to herself, other female artists and her young fans in allowing herself to be ‘pimped’ and ‘exploited’, saying that as a role model “it is absolutely NOT in ANY way an empowerment of yourself or any other young women, for you to send across the message that you are to be valued (even by you) more for your sexual appeal than your obvious talent” (O’Connor, 2013). Lennox adds to the debate by focussing on the impact that videos such as that of Cyrus and the notorious *Blurred Lines* video (Robin Thicke featuring Pharrell) have, saying that “it seems obvious that certain record companies are peddling highly styled pornography with musical accompaniment” (Lennox, 2013). Her concern is rooted in the protection of the younger children and teens to whom the music is marketed: “boundaries need to be put in place so that young kids

aren't barraged by market forces exploiting the 'normalisation' of explicit sex in underage entertainment" (Lennox, 2013). This powerful criticism by women who have had successful careers in music suggests that there are alternative options to this highly sexualised mode of performance and highlights the potential detrimental impact that such imagery has on younger audiences.

The issue of female representation is not limited to women's visual portrayal but also relates to stylistic traits and performativity, as suggested by the under-representation of women in genres outside pop music. This is an area which Eisentraut references in his theorisation of personal access, when he suggests that "genres aid orientation and identification in musical choice but also serve as makers of identity and are saturated with quasi-social and moral associations and values" (2013:39).

Analysis across a range of other areas highlights the normative values and gendered forms of expectations which contribute to the segregation of feminine and masculine genres, instrument choices and performance modes.

As the above discussion has explored, pop music is largely accepted as a genre for female contribution, but this is diminished within a hierarchy of genres which mediate a socially acceptable (stereo)type of female consumer and performer. The failure of a female musician to conform to established gender norms can lead to criticism of their artistic contribution and act against their inclusion within popular music culture. These prejudices and choices can be understood to be causally related to the socio-cultural issues of identity formation, where culturally inherited meanings have been constructed through the male dominance and exclusivity of the arena of professional music. The social nature of popular music contributes to the desire for girls to identify, conform and fit in to a particular way of being. For young women aspiring to a career in music there is an intricate link between the pop stars who infiltrate their teens and the type of career that they pursue, which can be seen in the production and reproduction of pop music and imagery. The foundations for this have been evidenced through my research and also in the experiences of my interviewees and project participants, whose voices appear later in the thesis and provide a primary motivation for change through BSN.

Gender and Education

Developing the discourse on the marginal and material representation of women in popular music, I now turn my attention to the issues that surround the representation of women in the music curriculum. The importance of addressing gender issues in music education has been highlighted by Green (1997), whose schools-based research in shows how musical meanings, discourses and practices are produced and reproduced as gendered. Green refers to the school as “an overall framework in which gendered musical practices and gendered musical meanings are played out, in a microcosmic representation of their reproduction and construction in wider society” (1997:144), a theory which also aligns with my analysis of the pop music industry. The origins of this institutional gendering date back to the formation of mainstream education and are not limited to music alone.

Feminist critiques of mainstream education centre predominantly around equal access to opportunities, socialisation and the male monopolisation of knowledge production. This school of thought came to prominence through the liberal, socialist and radical thought of the second wave feminist movement and has been developed through Spender (1982) and Smith (1992). Their primary critique of mainstream education is again founded in the Beauvoirian principles of women as ‘other’, positioning women on the outside, requesting permission to gain access to a historically male domain and participate in activities from which they have previously been excluded. Mainstream education in the UK is rooted in a long tradition of patriarchy: the pursuit of women to gain access to an equal standard and level of education.

Through historical analysis Spender highlights some of the reasons for which women were denied access to education, ranging from notions of intellectual inferiority through to worries that education in non-domestic subjects would not adequately prepare women for their ‘natural’ role as wives and mothers. Further concerns were raised that “our brains might burst; we might lose our femininity, become de-sexed; grow hair on our chest or become physiologically unfit for motherhood” (1982:46). Developing this narrative, Spender goes on to examine the origins and continued presence of gender discrimination in the British educational system, stating that “the

system of education which is supposedly *our* system was set up by men long before women were permitted entry” (1982: 67), reinforcing the feminist perspective that we live in a society designed for men, by men. Smith develops this dialogue by suggesting that some of the challenges that girls encounter as ‘late comers’ to educational environments are rooted in this feeling of ‘other’. In her analysis of the ideological structures of women's exclusion, Smith states that “there is no one universal subject from whose perspective knowledge can be simply transformed into an objective and universal account” (1992:92). She goes on to suggest that “women have learned to set aside as irrelevant, to deny or obliterate their own subjectivity and experience” (1992:94). If, as Smith suggests, women have learned to work inside a discourse that they did not have a part in making, then this theory can be applied to education, where girls are asked to locate themselves inside a discursive field with little or no female representation that has constructed them as ‘other’. Smith proposes asking the question ‘from where you stand, what does this look like?’ and suggests that this methodology provides an opportunity to create a space for the “absent subject and absent experience to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds” (1992:97). This methodology is carried into my practice as I reflect on the opportunity afforded through the Both Sides Now programme to open up a new dialogue about the inclusion of women in the music curriculum.

Women and the Music Curriculum

Music has been included within a formal curriculum since the Education Act of 1880 and has a strong academic history (Hallam, 2010) but recent policy reform has had a devaluing impact and threatened the place of music and the arts within the curriculum. This period of reform is important in my practice in that it has placed an added responsibility on music providers who operate outside the formal structures of education to fill the gaps in access which are starting to appear. The curriculum reform that was implemented during Michael Gove’s tenure as Secretary of State for Education (2010-2014) placed a major emphasis on a particular group of subjects referred to as the English Baccalaureate, which includes Maths, English language and literature, the sciences, geography or history, and a language. It is specifically these subjects where pupils’ grades are measured at GCSE level in order to

benchmark the performance of the school in league table rankings, and as a consequence of this the teaching time dedicated to music and the arts has fallen dramatically. The repercussions from this have been discussed through investigative reports issued by the Cultural Learning Alliance (2018), the Musicians Union (2018) and the Incorporated Society of Musicians' *State of the Nation* report (ISM, 2019). The ISM report stated that "music education in England is now facing a crisis" (ISM, 2019: 6). It highlighted the decline in uptake of music at GCSE level – a fall of 23% between 2010 and 2018 – alongside a decline in teaching time, which was cut by 13.5% between 2010 and 2019. The report goes on to say that this reform "now threatens the very existence of music education" (ISM, 2019:8). As a consequence of this change, arts subjects such as music have come to be regarded as of less academic value, which in turn makes them a less viable career choice.

One intention of this curriculum reform was to present pupils with "a clear narrative of British progress with a proper emphasis on heroes and heroines from our past" (Gove, 2013). As a result, the curriculum specifically focuses on individual successes and stories and, as with all areas of history, the most documented figures in music are almost exclusively male, overlooking many important women and their contribution to society and the arts. The lack of women in the music curriculum was brought to more public attention through the micro-activism of a 17-year old girl, Jessie McCabe, who became aware that all of the 63 composers on the Edexcel A-level syllabus that she was studying were male. Jessie wrote an open letter and set up an online petition which stated: "I first thought this issue could be solved easily by contacting Edexcel directly and drawing their attention to their omission of women from the A-Level, as they advocate that students should engage in, and extend the appreciation of the diverse and dynamic heritage of music". She received the following response to a series of emails: "the assertion by Edexcel's Head of Music that 'there would be very few female composers that could be included [in the A-Level syllabus]'" (McCabe/Change.org, 2008). Targeting decision-makers Nicky Morgan (then Education Secretary) and Ian Stockford (Executive Director of the exam regulator Ofqual), Jessie drew attention to the fact that EdExcel were about to publish a new 2016 syllabus, again without any women present. After receiving 4000 signatures on her Change petition, Jessie managed to convince EdExcel of the importance of female representation. In December, Edexcel published their final

2016 A Level Music specification. The compulsory set works now feature compositions by Clara Schumann, Rachel Portman, Kate Bush, Anoushka Shankar and Kaija Saariaho, while a further twelve wider listening pieces are by women composers.

Carrying out my own analysis of the EdExcel GCSE curriculum was equally disheartening, with the set works in the category of Instrumental Music by Bach, Beethoven, Haydn and Mozart. In the vocal music syllabus one out of four of the set works is by a woman (a three-minute pop song co-written by the artist Adele with a male collaborator), music for stage and screen features again four men and one woman, and Esperanza Spalding features as the only other female in the fusion section. The AQA GCSE syllabus is devoid of female composers: in the historical section only Haydn, Handel, Chopin and Verdi feature. In the category of popular music three of the set works are by The Beatles and the fourth is the same Adele song that features on the EdExcel curriculum. Women are not represented at all in the traditional (and historically more acceptable) genre of folk music and there is no representation in the category of British 20th Century composers (BBC, 2019 no page number). This raises questions about women's continued absence in the Western canon. Bull (2016) asks:

Why do I still not hear her music? Why are we still so reluctant to programme music by women? Can it be that the tired anti-feminist argument that, somehow, to celebrate women's work is to diminish men's is still in play? I want a world of Caccini and Mozart, Hensel and Beethoven, Maconchy and Shostakovich. Surely, that world is a richer one for all of us? (2016:8)

Whilst historically women have never been 'written in' to the Western canon, this in itself should not be ignored. As Citron (1993) writes, "the canon creates a narrative of the past and a template for the future opening up or closing down barriers to imagining what is possible" (1993:23). Through education there is an opportunity for girls *and* boys to be taught about the women who did reach a degree of prominence in their own time and, more importantly, why their musical legacies have largely been

forgotten. While the curriculum does not stand alone in constructing these subjective positions, without this conversation women in music are positioned as less important than their male counterparts. This consistent, undermining narrative has an impact on girls as well as boys and contributes to the belief system which they then take out into the professional field.

The shift from education into the professional arena situates the next piece of analysis, which examines the gap between music education and professional careers. Despite a diminishing level of uptake for music GCSE and a disheartening picture of female representation in the music curriculum, according to Vick Bain's (2019) report *Counting the Music Industry: The Gender Gap*, girls now outnumber and outperform boys at GCSE level, with 2019 seeing female participation rise to 55%. Bain identifies a slight decline at A-level, where female students made up 48% of 2019 entries, with representation decreasing slightly further to 44.3% at degree level (2019: 4-5). My reflections on this research from my position as a practitioner prompt more questions than answers. While statistically females make up an almost equal percentage of music students at GCSE, A-level and degree level, this raises questions about the proportional disparity between uptake of music at education level and the drop-off at a professional level, where women's representation drops to 17% of songwriters and under 20% of signed artists.

This discussion has outlined the absence and inclusion of women in the music curriculum alongside the broader theme of personal access. It indicates the extent to which change is still required in order to displace the nuanced, subtle and socially accepted barriers that young women regularly encounter. The call for reform by those interested in improving education for girls takes many different forms. Some advocates insist on adding women's voices to what exists. While Gaskell and Willinsky (1995) call for a 'new' curriculum (1995:46), others focus on what is taught and how it is taught. Through my practice I have sought to refresh these enquiries and open up a new dialogue about the inclusion of women's historical and contemporary contributions in schools, in order to ask what practical changes can be made and how Both Sides Now can contribute to this. The absence of female role models is something that I have reflected on in my practice and something that the

BSN digital resource attempts to address, as discussed in the case study at the end of this chapter. The final level of Eisentraut's framework which I go on to examine is that of musical participation.

Level 3: Participation

Eisentraut's third level of access refers to a deeper and more meaningful *participation* in music. Eisentraut describes this as having the means to "Participate, Create, Perform, Compose, be part of and learn to do" (2013:28). While this definition represents a transition from passive to active engagement, Eisentraut caveats this to explain that participation is not necessarily about performing but can also be about belonging to a movement, such as was described by Garratt (1984) in her analysis of teenage fandom. In her reflections Garratt recounted being part of a tartan army of Bay City Rollers fans, drawn together through a sense of solidarity and belonging. This sense of belonging and the affect it engenders is of particular interest to the participatory work within BSN and introduces the notion of social capital as a factor which affects and influences the opportunities and experiences of musical participation. My analysis of this level focuses predominantly on the narrative of the participatory and community practices which have informed the development of BSN and the debates around how this supports access to music-making.

The development of participatory practice in music education has historically been connected to the notion of 'access for all'. Pedagogically it originates from the community music movement, which according to McKay and Higham:

... developed broadly from the 1960s and had a significant burgeoning period in the 1980s. Community music nationally and internationally has gone on to build a set of practices, a repertoire, an infrastructure of organisations, qualifications and career paths. There are elements of cultural and debatably pedagogic innovations in community music (2011:8).

Hallam (2010) describes community music as an "elusive concept" with a participatory practice:

Guided by the principles of access to music making for all, equality of opportunity, participation and inclusiveness, community music initiatives encompass workshops and musical activities in a wide range of community settings, facilitated by musicians representing diverse musical genres and interest areas (2010: 314).

Both Hallam and McKay and Higham cite the formation of Youth Music in 1999 and its national network of 'action zones' as central in establishing the practice as a regularly funded feature of the British music-making landscape. As one of Youth Music's founding action zones (originally conceived as GMMAZ, Greater Manchester Music Action Zone), the company has developed an approach to participation that is entrenched within these parameters. Other notable examples of this pedagogic practice in the UK include the In-Harmony project²⁰ and Exchanging Notes²¹, which take a collaborative approach to tackling social issues through music. While the scope of this research does not allow for deeper analysis of these projects, they can also be considered as strategies that have disrupted the status quo and through long-term investment and research have built up an in-depth evidence base to support this approach to change-making.

In this context, and very specifically in the case of BSN, there is an additional tier of socio-cultural activism embedded within the practice. This relationship between the arts and social change has also been a feature of community arts practices over the decades (Hallam, 2010; Higgins, 2012; Creech et al 2020). Increasing levels of cultural production and cultural activism have contributed to a wider societal transformation in many areas of social life. Sommer (2014) states that "culture has a real transformative power over society, through the potential of both creative expression and heritage to impact and change minds, perceptions and opinions, to

²⁰ The In-Harmony project was developed from the success of the Venezuelan El Sistema orchestral model, which was created, according to Hallam "to use the orchestra as a safe, social and empowering space – to sustain and develop the well-being of children" (2010:336)

²¹ Exchanging Notes was a 4-year research project led by Youth Music. The focus of the project was to examine the impact of engaging young people deemed to be 'at risk' through a child-centred, popular music pedagogy.

initiate, impulse social transformation by opening spaces for dialogue” (2014:13). According to Buser and Arthurs (2013), activism through culture can be defined as “a set of creative practices and activities which challenge dominant interpretations and constructions of the world while presenting alternative socio-political and spatial imaginaries in ways which challenge relationships between art, politics, participation and spectatorship” (2013:1) They outline a number of key features, framed according to three broad concepts, that “challenge dominant constructions of the world; present alternative socio-political and spatial imaginaries; and disrupt relationships between art, politics, participation and spectatorship” (2013:5). These characteristics all directly relate to the BSN Theory of Change and the approach to developing the programme which has at its core a commitment to modelling new ways of thinking about gender in music, challenging dominant constructions and opening up a space for the collective exploration of cultural imaginaries.

As this chapter has highlighted, music is an important mechanism whereby identities are formed and performed and one of the means by which gendered social expectations and inequalities are adopted and reproduced in the public sphere. As such, it is also an important site of disruption and resistance where counter-narrative stories can play out, opening up possibilities for rethinking gendered boundaries and challenging deep-rooted systems and ways of thinking. I explore the implications for disruptive participatory practice in chapter two, which looks at the impact of alternative music-making spaces on the artistic agency of BSN participants. Reflecting on the overarching narrative to this chapter, my practice reflections here focus on the creation of the BSN curriculum resource.

BSN Curriculum Resource: Rationale, Aims and Observations

This case study depicts the decision making, development and implementation of the [BSN curriculum resource](#), illustrating the current issues which this chapter has highlighted and translating some of the theoretical methodologies into practice. The resource models a strategy for change, an alternative source for classroom teaching which prioritises contemporary female music creators.

Discussing what needs to change, Green states: 'I believe in a non-pragmatic response: an *awareness* of gendered musical meaning and of its influential presence, within our musical experiences, which in and of itself must be the first necessity and the last objective of any intervention' (1997:256). Here Green suggests the concept of critical consciousness, which, when applied in the context of my practice, underlines the importance of the awareness of the historical and ongoing inequalities outlined above. As such, I felt that as part of the educational strand of this programme, a key goal must be to raise greater awareness of the musical achievements and experiences of female composers today. Throughout the programme we have tried to keep the focus progressive and wherever possible to celebrate the work of women in music, while also growing a public consciousness of the issues they still face.

My starting point to develop this was a conversation which revealed a shared passion with the Head of Learning, Joanna Mangona, for an organisation called Charanga. Charanga is the UK's largest provider of educational technology, digital teaching and learning resources for music. Their reach and impact are vast, and when we began working with them in 2014 their resources were used in over 7,000 schools nationally (70% of primary schools and 55% of secondary schools) and by over 50,000 music teachers. This translates to a direct reach of over 1.25 million children who have their music lessons supported by Charanga every week. With the platform and tools that Charanga already have in place we agreed to collaboratively design and build an interactive cloud-based resource for the programme, with the intention of normalising the role of women within the music industry into the everyday thinking of children of all genders aged 9-14 (upper KS2 and KS3).

To summarise the issues as outlined above, the resource has been developed as a response to low female representation in the current music curricula and elsewhere in the mass media, which has resulted in limited access to inspirational role models for young women, and to concerns relating to the narrow stereotypical treatment extended to female performers, which are often ideologically image-driven rather than foregrounding an artists' skill and capability. The overarching aim for this strand of the project is to create a female-focussed, alternative music curriculum which

presents information about a diversity of music creators and opens up a dialogue around personal and professional development.

In order to deliver this, we began our work with Charanga to devise and develop a resource which bridges the access barriers associated with the personal level of engagement, opening up conversations about identity, career choice and personal experience. It was an ambition to work with identifiable 'role models' to tell their story in an emotionally engaging way. As part of this process we wanted to explore the artists' transition from music education into professional employment in music as an area highlighted to disproportionately affect women in terms of the barriers they encounter. Fundamentally the aim of the resource was to normalise the presence of women in music for girls and boys.

The first issue I chose to address was looking at the impact of curriculum content, with the main aim of improving and increasing the visibility of female music creators of the past and present in order to improve the gender balance of the future. As my research has highlighted, one of the key gaps in music education is the lack of access to conditions that enable young women to imagine themselves in professional positions, to do as Smith (1992) suggests and put themselves at the starting point of a vocational journey and, from there, explore and form a more authentic musical identity. The correlation between authenticity and musical identity highlights some of the psychological challenges that can be prevalent with young women in relation to their confidence, self-esteem and overall emotional wellbeing. This is an important area to interrogate, as my analysis strongly indicates that this is one of the root causes of the gender gap – the fact that women do not see themselves reflected in music education and, as a result of this, from an early age there is an extension of the feeling of 'other'. This situation compounds issues of insecurity or 'imposter syndrome' and is manifest in the language and behaviour of female artists. Reflection on the artist interviews for the BSN resource reveals that the artists have been reluctant to talk confidently about their capabilities. There seems to be an unwillingness to celebrate success, as if it is always due to luck or good fortune rather than an achievement they have worked for and earned. This relates back to these formative experiences, where the successes and achievements of female artists are neither recognised nor celebrated.

We agreed two main strands for the resource:

1. Musical Timeline – a timeline that represents predominantly Anglo-American women in music working in a range of genres and disciplines from the past 100 years.
2. Two themed teaching units focusing on inspirational women working in music, including an overview and information about gender equality and a series of inspirational lesson plans.

The process of developing the resource was slow and at times overwhelming when we stopped to consider the magnitude of reach and the importance of creating powerful but relevant and accessible content. I knew that through this resource I wanted to include a diversity of artists at different stages of their career, working in different genres and scenes, and enjoying sustained careers as musicians. I did not want to present our selection of artists as universally appealing or in the style of a Top 10 list. I knew that we would be limited by our budgets and also by an artist's interest and availability. Not all artists are comfortable with being put in a 'role model' position and some are not comfortable with the conversation around gender equality. After much deliberation, I felt the best way to approach the process of artist selection was to work with women who had been involved in BSN: artists who were socially engaged on the matter of gender equality and who understood what we were trying to achieve. The artists selected for inclusion in the resource were: Anna Meredith (composer and producer), Lady Ice (rapper and producer), Stealing Sheep (3 piece electro-pop trio), ESKA (singer and song-writer), Afrodeutsche (DJ and producer) and Shiva Feshareki (contemporary composer and turntablist).

The process of developing the resource involved working closely with Joanna Mangona. Together we shaped up a series of questions designed to explore the artists' identity (how they self-identify), their journey, and their creative process and product. We explored topics such as inspiration, role models and confidence. From here each artist or group was interviewed on film by Joanna and the interview transcripts were then analysed and grouped thematically in order to identify commonalities in the artists' responses. On completion of all the interviews we categorised them according to the areas of gender, identity, personal qualities and the music itself. The whole process was inspiring and hearing women talk about

their career from an educational perspective was refreshing – they presented a factual and accessible insight into their job, their journey and their experiences. It became apparent that the personal narrative was an important way to make the resource relatable, allowing the viewer to reflect on the artists' stories. For everyone we interviewed, their love of music began in school, as a child – a compelling personal connection for the pupils to make. With the interview material gathered and the content thematically linked we handed over the next phase of the process to Charanga. Joanna developed a curriculum structure around the resource (as outlined below) and the technical team led on the digital build, developing the existing Charanga framework.

Once we had a first prototype of the resource, we ran a series of consultation sessions for schools and music hubs across the North of England, in Liverpool, Manchester, Sefton, Carlisle and Wakefield. These sessions brought together focus groups of teachers and music practitioners to test and feedback on the resource. We received a positive response from the teachers who took part in the pilot consultation period noting comments such as this:

This is refreshingly different and looks really interesting

I hadn't heard of Both Sides Now before coming to this session... I'm a big supporter of women in music. Increasing female representation on the curriculum is so important. Girls will be inspired to take music seriously and that can only be a good thing

I love the identity angle, it feels like a really good approach to introduce my class to the concept of gender

I already use Charanga in my school, and I think this is just fantastic. It is about time women's role in music was held up as the norm and that students have role models to look up to

Even though most of these artists will be new to my class I know they will find their stories engaging and inspiring.

The teachers (who were mostly female) were very excited to have a resource that promoted gender equality and commented on how there was nothing else like this in their curriculum. There were some concerns over the accessibility of some of the

artist choices from a stylistic perspective. It felt like a challenge to make a 'women in music' module and not be able to access any household names, but then an aim of the project was also to broaden the students' musical horizons and move beyond the stereotypical pop role models. The analysis of this resource aligns with ways in which the experience, tastes and choices of young women influence identity formation. This refers back to Eisentraut's levels of access and the concept of music education as a site where identities are formed - and a site in need of disruption.

One message that was overwhelming from these test and consultation sessions was the realisation that there was nothing else currently like this within music education and there was a palpable sense of excitement about introducing the resource to the classroom.

In the style of similar Charanga resources the Both Sides Now module is interactive, with supporting documentation which includes inspirational videos, lesson plans and activity ideas. Significantly, it also fulfils the National Curriculum requirements.

The [Units of Work](#) comprise:

- Listen and Appraise – listen to and appraise the work of the women we are learning about and research into cross-curricular topics that arise.
- Musical Activities, e.g. creation and exploration – learn to sing songs around the topic/issues that arise. Play instruments to accompany and improvise.
- Compose – a creative response.
- Perform – perform outcomes and record comment on our work/peer evaluation.
- Evaluation – a place where teachers can upload reflections and recordings for tracking and on-going evaluation of the project.

Curriculum Resource, Reflections and Feedback

Developing a project of this scale and ambition was not without its challenges. Overarchingly the biggest challenge that we faced was in making the resource accessible on a personal level – considering our use of language, topics and concepts, and the music and experience of the artists with whom we worked. This was navigated by making it a very interactive unit and by putting a focus on

individual identity, which made it applicable to anyone using it – hence the title Music and Me.

We experienced some difficulties with regards to launching the work in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. The first unit went live on the Charanga website in March 2020, the same time as the first national lockdown. We adapted to make it available alongside other Charanga tools for home learning. As the pandemic disrupted classroom teaching, our quantitative and qualitative data has been restricted, and I have been unable to measure the full impact of the resource. However, through the data Charanga have gathered there are positive signs that the resource is being accessed. The first unit has been visited 205,583 times by 7,838 users, with teachers using the unit's content for 18 minutes at a time on average.

Reflecting on the partnership with Charanga and the development of the resources, there were a number of lessons that we learnt and some aspects which, in hindsight, we would have approached differently. The main issue that we had was in refining the content for the resource, and this was because we had not started with a clear enough narrative. This issue relates to the use of feminist praxis as a research methodology. The methodology requires an openness and a commitment to pursue the narrative which the interviewee wants to tell, and while we knew what our aims were in eliciting stories and experiences from the artists, we did not know what they were going to contribute to the resource. We were fortunate that there were unifying themes which reinforced the research hypothesis regarding the access barriers that many women acknowledged having experienced. Another issue which arose through this free-flowing narrative approach was that we were talking with an in-depth knowledge and appreciation of topics such as identity, equality and discrimination which were unlikely to be common parlance for children and young people. This was where Joanna's experience of developing curriculum-relevant and accessible content became important and, while she reflected that it had probably been the toughest module she had ever worked on, she felt happy with the balance that had been struck between those personal and identifiable stories and the quality of the musical learning that the resource provided.

Personally, I had a few confidence issues throughout the development of the process, feeling worried about the way we curated the featured artists and what we were imparting as 'knowledge'. The resource was never designed to be exhaustive or even exemplary, however, and we negotiated these concerns by adding a few lines such as: *We have thought about successful and inspirational women and those that have changed the course of musical history.*

The legacy for this piece of work is a live and active teaching resource on the Charanga website which is accessed by primary and secondary schools nationally. We will be able to build on our learning as we create a second module for this resource and feel clearer and more confident in the ambition to normalise the achievements of women in music, celebrating the many talented women making music now and inspiring future generations.

Access Reflections

The above analysis has examined the concept of access on three interconnected levels, discussing a series of recurrent themes that pose barriers to young women during the formative stages of their engagement with music.

Utilising Eisentraut's *Theory of Music Accessibility*, this research has highlighted the significance of early influences on the personal and social development of young women. It demonstrates the impact of gender norms within educational and cultural contexts and how this constructs women as absent or limited subjects in terms of their social and creative contributions. The socio-cultural implications of this marginalisation and de-legitimisation contribute to a series of displacing barriers and limiting ideologies on a physical, personal and participatory level. This positions music education as an arena in need of structural reform with more conscious inclusivity, greater representation and visible participation required in order to move towards a more equitable future.

Having identified a number of barriers which still need to be broken down or bypassed, through my practice I have modelled and analysed a strategy for change which creates a dedicated curriculum to intervene in the cyclic reproduction of male

dominance. The Charanga modules have offered an alternative resource for classroom teaching, presenting guidance, tools and techniques for music creation from a female perspective. This has been rolled out to primary and secondary schools across the country, integrating the female experience into the curriculum and profiling the abilities of a diversity of female artists.

The next chapter develops these themes to explore the insights and agency of BSN artists and participants who have overcome these identified barriers to make their way into a professional music career through different levels of access. The chapter explores their freedom of choice alongside the patriarchal structures that dominate the music industry, examining the personal and professional experiences that have shaped their careers.

Chapter Two Agency: Artistic Agency, Industry Structures and Strategies of Resistance

Introduction

The arena of popular music is often referenced as a commodity or a market. While the commercial aspects of the industry are undeniable, it is also much more than this. As discussed in chapter one, popular music can also be understood as being a durable and influential site for identity formation and social development. In the first chapter I analysed the concept of 'access' as a lens through which to view the barriers and inequalities that disproportionately impact girls and young women during the formative stages of their musical development. I also explored the process of creating a new curriculum as a social practice with the power to dismantle gendered barriers. This chapter develops that narrative, extending my investigation to examine the issue of gender within the career pathways of early and mid-career female artists. This analysis is framed through the lens of 'agency', the second of three key words in this thesis and the second stage in my Both Sides Now [Theory of Change](#). The focus of this chapter is to deepen my understanding of the female experience of artistic agency and the working conditions and affects which impact and undermine it. In addition to informing my Theory of Change, 'agency' is also an underlying value within the practice of the BSN programme – a moral orientation which I strive to facilitate, ensuring that the women who participate in the programme do so on their own terms, with their own agenda, to explore their own interests.

The chapter begins with an exploration of the concept of agency, analysing key theoretical perspectives from social and feminist theory that have informed my research and which go on to contribute to my conceptualisation of change, including: Abbot et al (1990); Walby (1990); Butler (1993, 1997); McNay (2000) and Ahmed (2017). This analysis clarifies my understanding of the term and provides a framework from which to examine the agential capacity of women in music from an artistic and social perspective. From here this chapter pursues a primary line of enquiry which explores the conditions which facilitate or deter artistic agency and the affects and interaction between individual behaviour, social norms and institutionalised practices. The implications of this examination are animated by an empirical analysis of agency within the enactments and experiences of BSN guest

artists and participants, drawing on interview data, lived experience, and observations. This examination opens up further discussions about learned ways of being, issues of conformity and what Young (1980) refers to as 'inhibited intentionality'. The chapter concludes by considering different modalities of artistic agency analysed through interview material and practice-based reflections comprised of observations, evaluation feedback and anecdotal notes. This analysis is framed by Creech et al's (2020) concept of 'musical possible selves' and explores the role that BSN participatory practices and contexts play in enabling women to break with traditional norms and define and defend their artistic boundaries.

Agency, Feminism and Structure

In this section I examine the concept of agency as one of the orienting principles of feminist thought, exploring its epistemological origins and evolutionary adaptations. The concept of agency is complex and is further complicated by its interchangeable use with terms such as freedom, choice, control and ownership, which create different framings for the term. While its dictionary definition references it within the context of individual action, feminist studies suggest that a more equitable definition clusters around the interactions between actors, action and structure.

Agency has always occupied a central place within feminism, whether implicitly or explicitly. Historically this has focussed on the denial of agency as a way to explain the marginalisation and disempowerment of women. However, agency is also regarded as an essential element of gender equality, and, as Mahmood (2005) highlights, some feminist literature makes it almost coterminous with 'liberation'. The concept of agency has predominantly been theorised through the sociological discipline. McNay regards agency as a complex and multifaceted concept suggesting it "does not operate in isolation, rather it permeates the social landscape being influenced by, and influencing social factors, such as individual behaviours and institutions structures" (2000:21). Abbott et al (1990) describe it as "the abilities of individuals and groups to think, speak and act as knowing subjects who are able to engage and interact with the social world, including social structures, in a purposeful and meaningful way" (1990:76). These quotes reiterate that any meaningful account of agency must look beyond the actions of the individual. Abbott et al cite the work of

Wright Mills (1954) as one of the first theorists to offer an enquiry into the relationship between an individual's circumstances, what Mills describes as their *biography*, and the larger institutional context that they occupy, their *history*. In his work *The Sociological Imagination* Mills suggests that "personal troubles are frequently social ills" (1959:26). Abbot applies this analysis in a feminist context, using the example of women's position in the labour market to illustrate the systematic way in which women are concentrated into roles that are less well paid or carry less status than men.

This cannot be explained simply by reference to the characteristics of individual women; we have to consider *structural* factors that shape women's experiences. In this respect, we have to consider the relationship between structure (the constellation of social institutions, organisations and practices that shape our behaviour) and agency (the capacity of individuals to act) in shaping our experiences of, and positions within, the social world (1990:41).

Subsequent influential social theorists including Foucault (1976), Giddens (1984) and Marx (1982) have developed theorems of agency from this framing. Foucault's work examines the enforcement of gendered behavioural norms and the social construction of sexuality. His work develops from Wright Mills' perspective of progressive imaginaries, asking a question I refer to throughout the thesis – how can things be better? – and raising the importance of 'resistance' as another recurrent, dynamic theme. Marxist feminists have focused on issues which relate to the structural aspects of social organisation, particularly the role of the family and the sexual division of labour. This is further developed through Giddens, whose 'structuration theory' explores the interdependent relationship between structure and agency as part of the duality of structure. He states: "Social actions create structures, and it is through social actions that structures are produced and reproduced, so that they survive over time" (1984:21). Giddens' duality of structure proposes the entanglement between structures that make social action possible and the social action which creates those structures. He asserts that "structure has no existence independently of the knowledge that agents have about what they do in their day-to-day activity" (1984:27), further emphasising not only the role of social structures in defining a relatively narrow range of gender roles but also an

individual's capacity to exercise agency. In short, an approach that privileges agency highlights the extent to which gender is not simply something that is 'done to us' but rather something that we 'do'. This is a theory pioneered through the highly influential work of Butler (1993, 1997), who utilised Foucauldian ideas to explain aspects of women's oppression based on the way that power is exercised in society. Butler's contribution towards feminist theories of agency stems from her notion of performativity and enactment, stating that the locus of agency is within the individual. Clare (2009) suggests that "Butler theorizes agency in terms of signification. She contends that the gendered subject is constituted through performativity and that the notion of performativity provides a theory of agency" (2009:51). Whilst this is a generalisation, based upon the assumption of activating agency through action and interaction, it positions the subject in the context of repeated, gendered norms. The notion of performativity assumes continual repetition, which, as this study has shown, is central to feminist critiques of music making, but this also offers an opportunity to introduce difference into this cycle. These gaps, when enacted in the context of repetition, are, Butler argues, the location of agency. She furthers this in terms of signification, which, she writes, "harbors within itself what the epistemological discourse referred to as 'agency'" (1993:85). This element of Butler's analysis of agency highlights the aforementioned interplay between intersecting forces, which opens questions about a subject's independence to be accountable and to what degree there is freedom of individual choice outside of established patterns of gender inequality. I return to this theme later in the chapter in relation to strategies of resistance.

Writing at a similar time, Walby (1990) suggests that:

a feminist theory of agency must explain how it is possible for women in male-dominated societies to live in ways that reflect their genuine needs and concerns, and it must explain how it is possible for women to develop critiques of sexist social and political institutions and to mount active resistance. Moreover, it must accomplish both of those tasks without pretending that people are capable of stepping outside their own socially determined viewpoints to attain a God-like perspective (1990:84).

Central to Walby's examination of patriarchy is her insistence that we see patriarchy neither as wholly structural nor as pure agency. She argues that if we see patriarchy as fundamentally about structure, we are in danger of seeing women as passive victims, proposing an account of patriarchy that explains changes in both structure and agency. She proposes that major shifts must be made both within women themselves and by the society and cultures that surround them if we are to make meaningful progress.

Collectively these theorists have sought ways of developing a wider understanding of feminist agency, looking at and beyond conventional structures and institutions to explore elements of the social. This discourse is evolved further through the work of McNay, who has called for a *rethinking* of agency to include discussions of modernity and the changing nature of social and economic structures. McNay acknowledges the need to understand agency through the marginalised experiences of women. In a way that resonates with Walby's theorisation of patriarchy, she states: "These experiences attest to the capacity for autonomous action in the face of often overwhelming cultural sanctions and structural inequalities" (2000:42). McNay also agrees with the need for contextualisation within power relations, applying Butler's theory of embodiment to enable a more open conception of gender identity. She goes on to argue that this work needs to be broadened out from the "unidirectional process of symbolic inscription in order to understand how acts deemed as resistant may transcend their immediate sphere in order to transform collective behaviour and norms" (2000:4). Offering a line of questioning that draws on aspects of the social as well as the psychological, McNay proposes a generative theory of subjectification in order to "provide a more dynamic theory of agency, through which to examine how social actors may adapt and respond in an active fashion to the uncertainties unleashed in an increasingly differentiated social order" (2000:161). For me this provoked further thought as to the missing dimensions in both the analysis of agency and also in relation to the analysis of women's position within the music industry. I began to consider ways in which I could apply this through my practice-based research, drawing on aspects of the social as well as the psychological. I began to consider the way in which an awareness of affect could invigorate my enquiry into artistic agency, enabling more nuanced theoretical possibilities and experiential subtleties to arise. To briefly address criticisms of affect in relation to agency, I am

not considering affect as autonomous or as an alternative to agency, rather I am positioning it as part of a non-conscious process relevant to the emergence of agency and using it as a tool of critical enquiry alongside legitimate questions of oppression.

Agency and Affect

Ahmed (2010) suggests that affect can be understood as “the messiness of the experiential, the unfolding of bodies into worlds, and the drama of contingency, how we are touched by what we are near” (2010:37). She continues: “To be affected by something is to evaluate that thing. Evaluations are expressed in how bodies turn toward things” (2010:38). Probyn states that “affects have specific effects”, adding that “different affects make us feel, write, think, and act in different ways” (Probyn 2010, cited in Gregg and Seigworth, 2010:74). Brennan (2004) examines the ‘transmission of affect’, asking: “Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and ‘felt the atmosphere’?” (2004: 1). How we walk into the room, and what we feel or receive, is discussed further in Brennan (2004), Ahmed (2004) and Gibbs (2001). Gibbs thinks of affect as contagious, suggesting that “bodies can catch feelings as easily as catch fire” (2001:1), describing our human vulnerability to receive transmissible affects associated with “every conceivable kind of passion” (2001:1). In accepting this we can understand affect to have positive and negative connotations orienting us to ‘objects’ which are good or bad; she adds:

“Happiness can thus be described as intentional in the phenomenological sense (directed toward objects), as well as being affective (contact with objects). To bring these arguments together we might say that happiness is an orientation toward the objects we come into contact with. We move toward and away from objects through how we are affected by them” (2001:42).

These positive and negative forces of encounter establish and re-establish affect, a sense of anticipation which we carry into a space and which affects the way we perform in that space. In the context of the gendering of space and bodies in music, this is what can lead to the generative paradigm of female performativity – an anticipation or expectation placed on an arrival into a space before anything is said

or done. This has implications for a person's agential capacity, limiting what she might consider her options are in relation to performativity or any other agential enactments. Exercising agency in the context of these affects can lead to experiences of alienation, as Ahmed suggests, referencing her figure of the 'feminist kill-joy' as representative of an 'affect alien': "Does the feminist kill other people's joy by pointing out moments of sexism? Or does she expose the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy? The feminist is an affect alien: she might even kill joy because she refuses to share an orientation toward certain things as being good because she does not find the objects that promise happiness to be quite so promising" (2010:44). Here Ahmed opens up a framework for understanding the relationship and affective transactions which dominate the industry and the ways in which traditionally male 'objects' and 'bodies' (instruments, artefacts and offices) all work to control the experiential spaces and carry expectation set through affect. For aspiring artists these industry 'objects' and 'bodies' claim to hold the 'promise of happiness' but can impact an individual through a reading of the atmosphere or an invitation to enact or exercise agency, subconsciously infused through affect past and present. Working with such logic, this suggests that change in this context is only possible when these gendered processes become visible through the experiences of the 'feminist killjoy' or, as my practice posits, when individuals or groups are exposed to contradictory circumstances – in this case through the BSN practice as a separate experiential space.

The next phase of this enquiry is explored through the biography and lived experiences of my interviewees in the context of their career. I then go on to reflect on the impact of changing conditions for female musicians in relation to my practice through an empirical analysis and observation.

Agency and Structure in Practice

The institutional structuring of the industry is well documented, particularly through the work of Negus (1992, 1995) and Hesmondhalgh (1995, 1997), whose research offers insights into ways in which the cultures and practices exclude and mediate careers. There is not sufficient space here to unpack the full consequences of

this industry structuring, so for the purpose of this study the most constructive elements in this discussion are production and reproduction of the 'somatic norm'. As discussed in the introduction, Eikhof (2020) tells us that in creative careers this is "White, male, middle-classness" (2020:191) a 'norm' which is upheld by the persistence of gatekeeping. In an industry context, Lieb (2018) refers to the process of gatekeeping as "the role of building and popularizing music" (2018:58). Record labels have historically been understood as playing this intermediary role between artists and audiences and making decisions which influence what people hear. In the UK three major labels - Sony Music Entertainment, Warner Music Group and Universal Music Group - hold the largest share of the music marketplace and within these label structures, as discussed in the introduction, they are gendered in quite conventional ways, especially with regard to positions of power. The persistence of historical ideologies means that women are significantly under-represented, particularly in advanced and thus more influential and better paid positions (Eikhof, 2020), resulting in a gender pay gap²² characterised by female employees with average earnings of 33.8% per year less than men.

Negus suggests: 'The lack of women's voices in key decision making positions has undoubtedly influenced the type of acts which have been signed and the way in which artists have been prioritised, developed and presented' (1992:126). Lieb adds to this, "Major label signing practices leave commercial music standardized and homogenized; what becomes popular tomorrow often resembles what is popular today. Genuine departures from industry norms are rare because the existing industry system, which pursues the blockbuster model, does not know how to accommodate originality" (2018:92-93). My interview material reflects on the practical implications of these structures, often overlooked because they are regarded as natural. It brings feminist concerns into this discourse and attempts to unpack what the gendered procedures signify.

Consistent with the feminist methodologies which underpin this thesis, my analysis of agency begins and is led by the voices of my research participants, BSN ambassadors and participants. The concept of agency forms a framework for

²² Legislation which requires organisations with more than 250 employees to publish figures on their average pay gap between the sexes

conversation from which to explore the way the artists interpret and attribute agency in the context of their professional practice. Interwoven into the discussions are supporting theoretical findings which further validate the lived experience of the interviewees. My analysis follows the direction of the interviews, addressing concerns about the patterns, mechanisms and practices within the industry before shifting beyond the binary register of oppression and submission, foregrounding different kinds of agents and paving the way with notions of change. I close this section, and chapter, by drawing together the key themes which have emerged and reflect on the way in which this learning has informed the development of the BSN residency programme, considering the meeting place between structure and agency and exploring how, through my practice, I could facilitate different types of soft infrastructure in order to create the conditions for participants to express their artistic agency.

Interview Insights and Experiences

My initial research group consists of seven women aged between 21 and 50, all of whom are professional musicians. rapper Lady Ice, DJ 'Carlos' (aka Charlotte Bickley), singer-songwriter Beth Orton, Rebecca Hawley from pop trio Stealing Sheep, DJ and producer Afrodeutsche (aka Henrietta Smith-Rolla), composer and turntablist Shiva Feshareki, composer and song-writer Carla-Marie Williams. It is important to acknowledge the artists' 'professional' status in order to recognise the success that they have achieved in establishing themselves in an industry which is notoriously difficult to break into. Importantly, of the seven artists, three were working entirely independently while four were working with some level of support coming from management, booking agent, press, publisher or record label.

For a couple of the women I interviewed, there was resistance to foreground their gender as an identifier but throughout the conversation it was evident that they were aware of its existence as an issue. Keeping aligned to the feminist methodologies which underpin my research, the emphasis was upon letting the women talk. The interviews were semi-structured, with long periods of uninterrupted, free flowing conversation, which ensured that the direction of topic was led by the artists' stories and experiences.

Capability and Acceptance

My opening line of enquiry required the artists to focus on the early stage of their career, reflecting on the journey they had pursued. My hope was to elicit a conversation about the agency that they had shown in order to establish themselves within the profession of music and, from there, to explore how they felt that agency had manifested, grown, and been compromised or limited. When I first introduced the concept of agency, the predominant response was around ownership and control. As with most creatives, the artists' career journey had not been a linear process but, in our conversation, we paused to discuss this moment as a manifestation of active agency.

Three of the artists trained through formal education. The band Stealing Sheep discussed meeting after studying at LIPA music college and graduated with the same aim of cultivating a performance-based career. Shiva also studied music before pursuing it professionally but often felt isolated: "I just felt geeky and an outsider, so my career has always been self-led" (Shiva Feshareki, interview). Carlos studied at music college and left to follow her passion: "Music was always my hobby but now I'm turning it into a career, but I don't know how, I'm just saying 'yes' to things" (Carlos, interview). Others I spoke to were more driven. Carla-Marie said: "I was studying A-levels in politics and philosophy and I just knew I needed to pursue music, I was only 16 and somehow I convinced my Mum to let me leave college and try and make a career, from nothing" (Carla-Marie Williams, interview). Similarly, Lady Ice spoke about her determination but also her isolation: "I was just working on my own, even when my friends stopped coming to the studio, I just kept going day in, day out. There weren't any other women doing it, just me and sometimes I'd be with the boys but mostly I'd be on my own" (Lady Ice, interview). For Lady Ice, gendered isolation was one of the main challenges of starting a career, particularly within the heavily male-dominated genre of rap music with its strong history of misogynistic lyrical and visual content.

For others, despite knowing that they wanted, or in some cases needed, to pursue a career in music, that journey felt more organic, an innate calling. Henrietta reflected on her early life and her sense of wonder when in the presence of anything musical. Following a major break in her own career, playing solo and support gigs at venues

and clubs all over the world, she said: “My Mum told me that she had ‘prayed for me to have music’” (Henrietta Smith-Rolla, interview). She referred to the ‘cosmic nature’ of knowing this and she felt more comfortable aligning with a language that didn’t emphasise her own musical talent, technical capabilities or the agency she had shown in the choices that she was making. A number of other artists mirrored this mentality. Some were more forthcoming in terms of ‘owning’ their success, while most frequently referred to ‘luck’, the influence of other people or something more ethereal. These feelings resonated with me as something I had seen and heard a lot during the development of BSN, where multi-talented artists appeared unwilling to accept or acknowledge their abilities. It fits within the wider societal narrative, where a woman’s achievements can often be premised upon something ‘other’, ‘raw and natural’ or a ‘God-given gift’, rather than a reflection of her personal dedication to her craft, virtuosic ability, or technical genius. If societally we are unwilling to come to terms with women’s creative skill, then it is difficult to see how an individual can be expected to internalise it. I highlight the issue of acceptance as a component of agency and a leading narrative theme from the interviews. Here, I briefly explore some of the experiences and situations which instil this uncertainty into a great many talented women.

In her essay ‘Throwing Like A Girl Young’ (1980), Young develops the work of De Beauvoir to reflect on women’s physical existence (poise, coordination and positioning) as constrained by ‘structures’ and ‘conditions’, conceiving the phrase ‘inhibited intentionality’ to reflect the process of underestimating one’s abilities. Adopting this into the narrative of women in music, my conversations went on to explore the micro experiences and aggressions, the subtle and often unintentional behavioural, verbal or environmental indignities which contribute to the existence of ‘inhibited intentionality’ within female musicians. All of the artists I spoke with seemed frustrated by but resigned to the fact that these commonplace practices were ‘norms’ within their working life. To summarise some of the incidents that these women had encountered, all had experienced some form of questioning whenever they went into a live music setting along the lines of ‘where’s your boyfriend / manager / singer?’, the subtext of which was ‘where is the man in charge?’. Henrietta recounted a particularly challenging exchange with a sound engineer. It is important to note here that Henrietta uses the stage name Afrodeutsche, which appears gender-neutral to

someone who does not know the rules of the German language and that the 'e' makes it feminine: this was a deliberate move on her part, an agential strategy to overcome any preconceived gender prejudice. It has relevance in this context because the sound engineer did not know whether to expect a male or female artist and, given that it was a big DJ club gig, he was just expecting her to be a man. He ignored Henrietta for the first half hour while helping the other two (male) DJs to set up. When she asked where she should set up, he seemed put out and asked what she was doing there. After keeping calm and identifying herself, she proved her competence in setting up and playing the gig. The engineer came up to her at the end and said, "I didn't expect it to sound that good" – a harmful and unnecessary comment that added to a catalogue of humiliating moments which, while handled with grace and dignity, reinforced Henrietta's position as out-of-place in her profession. She reflected: "I had to act like it wasn't a problem and I kept my mind focussed on the fact that as long as I just did the best job I could, then maybe the next woman he worked with wouldn't have the same experience." However, everyone I spoke to had countless similar experiences. This was not a new experience for Henrietta, but it was a recent experience and a clear example of one of the issues which contribute to inhibited intentionality, a societal unwillingness to look beyond our own expectations and experiences.

Outside the micro level experiences, the wider institutional values do not promote or respect women's talent in the same way as that of their male counterparts. One way in which this manifests itself is in the use of gendered rather than technical language. Again, all of the artists I spoke to highlight the issue of their gender being used as a pre-fix to any reference to their capability. Lady Ice is constantly referred to as a 'female' rapper, despite having 'lady' in her name, Stealing Sheep are always a 'female' pop trio and Beth a 'female' singer-songwriter, suggesting the baseline assumption is that a musician is a male.

This concern was prevalent throughout the interviews: for a female performer, her gender precedes her capabilities and she is continually defined by it. This kind of otherness only strengthens the myth of women as out-of-place, as anomalies within music practice. All of my interviewees commented on the number of times that they are referred to as 'female' first and foremost. One artist, Carlos, explained that this

issue of categorising an artist by their gender rather than their ability or technical practice was then acted out through the actions of programmers and promoters, who have been heard to say, 'we have reached our female quota'. Carlos presented a different dimension to the issue. Recounting the story of her DJ name, she recalled that as, culturally, the issue of gender representation had become pertinent, she felt she was being selected out of tokenism rather than talent:

"It was around the time when people were starting to be conscious of the gender equality of line ups. And at the start, when I started out, I just wasn't actually very good at all because I was just starting out. But people kept asking me to play, which I sort of got in my head that it was just about that they wanted to have a female on their line-up, which I think is genuinely true for some people. And then, you know, they give you the sort of warm up slot and it's just a box ticking kind of exercise, because you're not actually that good, they don't want you to play the big headline slot, they just want to have it like a check on their list, which is good. Which is why I started playing at under a man's name because I thought it was funny . I thought it would be interesting to see if people still wanted me to play if they couldn't have a woman's name on the line up. Because I was just convinced that that's why people asked me, which is a bit cynical". (Carlos, interview)

While laughing about this, Carlos' experience is interesting in that it subverts the usual experience of being overlooked by gender. Instead she uses her agency to challenge what she feels is the tokenism of quota programming, an equally harmful rhetoric and an issue which is discussed in more depth in chapter three.

Gendered Boundaries and Economic Reproduction

After reflecting with the participants on the agency which had led them into their career, we discussed how much agency they felt they had in their current professional situation. For some, this sparked a strong response which introduced a new set of affiliated language, such as 'control' 'confidence' 'listened to' 'power' 'decision making' . More than one of them commented that it was nice to have the

opportunity to reflect and talk about their careers in this way and consider the progress they had made. One artist stated that her agency was compromised on a daily basis as she worked to come to artistic agreements with her management company. Beth spoke candidly about her thirty year career of negotiating her position in the industry:

“I think that when I tried to have agency when I was younger, it was like, alright bossy boots, alright listen to her, who does she think she is, and you’d always be like, ‘Oh God, sorry.’ You know, ‘oh she’s difficult, you know, because she wants to have an opinion on her fucking life’. And that’s not to say I wasn’t difficult, but my point is, it’s like I think what can make you a bit difficult is when you feel you’re having to stifle your voice to not be too, like, kind of bold.”

She went on to say:

“If you’re a girl you’ve got to like not have too much, you can’t be too proud, you can’t be too loud, you can’t be this, you can’t be that. You’ve got to keep your head down because that’s how you’re allowed to be in the room with the boys. It’s like bending your shape around rocks.” (Beth Orton, interview).

Beth’s analogy of ‘bending your shape around rocks’ was a familiar narrative throughout the interviews, and the negotiations which Beth reflected on throughout her thirty-year career were still present in the experiences of the artists who were at earlier stages in their career. Carla-Marie added:

“I think the challenges are, sometimes, being taken seriously as a woman and your ideas being heard and listened to, especially in male-dominated spaces. And if you don’t agree, or you disagree with something, being made to feel that you’re being difficult or emotional. I hate that word. When a man says to me, “Why are you being emotional?” I just want to be like, “Are you serious?” I want to scream” (Carla-Marie Williams, interview).

These quotes reinforce two points: firstly, that female agency or opinion is largely unwelcome and secondly, that by displaying this behaviour, the women are

operating outside their acceptable sphere. From this perspective they are portrayed as problematic or difficult. To pick up on Beth's metaphorical observation of 'bending your shape round rocks,' here she illustrates the compromises that female artists have to undertake in order to progress in their careers. Negus states, "women are generally having to conform to and fit in with the established conventions and existing ways of working" (1995:126). While these conditions do not deter women from participating in popular music altogether, their existence poses a challenge to their agency as artists, binding them instead to conventions and formulae. Similarly, for Carla-Marie, and her experience of being called 'emotional', the implicit demand in this question is for her to be less emotional, or less 'open' or less 'soft'. Ahmed examines the use of metaphors such as 'softness' and 'hardness' to show how "emotions become attributes of collectives, which get constructed as 'being' through 'feeling'" (2004:2), language which she suggests is, of course, gendered. The subtext to both these comments is that these women are out of place. This is a challenge which women in music are often faced with, the counter-narrative to which I go on to explore through my practice.

As discussed in chapter one and developed in this chapter, the issue of replication and a lack of diversity in decision-making roles is one of the most significant challenges that women face. "Female musicians can get pigeonholed by bigger labels" states Beth;

"The label wants to portray you in a slightly different way to how you want to be portrayed. That happens with men and women, but definitely more so with women."

This includes what the artist should wear, and what dress size they should be:

"It may be that your music is compromised as well, which is why quite a lot of people are now taking the independent route." (Beth Orton, interview).

As a society we hold youth, beauty and sexual attraction as unspoken values which are given precedence predominantly through popular culture. These cultural values are central to the positioning of women, filtered through male-driven ideologies that set unhealthy aspirations. The image and language of beauty and sexuality is one of

the biggest challenges that stands in the way of a more gender equal society. Kotarba et al state "Despite the fact that there are multiple scripts available for performing one's gender, it seems that popular entertainment media (both in their magazine and television forms) are intrigued with very few particular ways of doing femininity." (2009:100). Inherent within this discourse is the issue of gendered imagery, and this struck resonance with all the BSN artists, mirroring conversations which I had heard acted out in a number of different projects. Carlos states "A woman is sexualized in a way that a man isn't, a woman has to decide if she is going to exploit her sex or not. If she does, what are the consequences?" (Carlos, interview) The 'conversation' continues with Rebecca, who says "A lot of the major success stories in the industry are of women who have played on their sexuality" (Rebecca Hawley, interview). This tends to reinforce the 'sex sells' ethos which can be playful and ironic or simply and undeniably sexy. It's difficult to decipher whether they are subject to some kind of exploitation or are liberating their own free will and displaying anarchical messages, but whichever, it can stimulate a negative ideology [and] lead to the objectification of the female artist

Carlos develops the narrative, saying

"Society makes it so that we do trade on our beauty, or our youth then; let's not call it beauty, let's call it youth. And then when you reach that age where your beauty, your youth, is no longer the asset, you're left with who you are... And then there's also the thing of, like, women who get successful, as like DJs, especially with DJs, they tend to be..., the ones that get really commercial successful tend to be really traditionally Western idea of beauty standards. They're really attractive and there's this kind of fetishization of women in electronic music, like there has to be this kind of sex element. And do remember that there are millions of underground DJs who are amazing and they're just doing their own thing, but I feel like if you see that and it doesn't feel like you, it makes it harder for you to see where you fit in" (Carlos, interview).

Beth reflects on this in her third decade as a musician:

“At this stage it’s about going beyond beauty, to go beyond my youth, to still be making music when I know that I’m on stage now. I mean I have walked into venues and they are like, “Bloody hell,” and I’m like, “Alright, this is how I look now, like I’m sorry!” The poster on the wall is like that and I walk in like, oh, out of the tour bus looking like shit. And it’s like you know, and I do look back now and I’m like, bloody hell they’re all really cute these girls and it’s that particular beauty of youth. And then you carry on and you’re like, “Well I’m still doing it,” and I have to have dignity..., and in another way it’s like this other kind of dignity”.

I spoke to Beth about the impact of her age on her agency and she reflected that ageing had given her the confidence to pursue her own creative pathway in a way that suited her. She reflects further on this in relation to the section on resistance. Lady Ice discussed how she has always worked independently in an attempt to retain her own agency and identity. The recurrent nature of this topic highlights the narrow boundary between sexual agency and sexual objectification. It raises concerns of the performative function of gender and the reiterative practices which Butler references. In terms of agential choice, the issue of sexualised gender stereotypes limits the ways and directions in which women are able to progress in their career. This was particularly evident in the interviews of the women who were working independently: “It’s hard enough to have to be constantly promoting and marketing yourself, without having to try and fit into one of the media’s acceptable stereotypes,” said Carlos, who is working to bypass gendered stereotypes in her artistic practice and promotional imagery (Carlos, interview). She acknowledges that there are positives to this situation and this is something that Lady Ice agreed with: “I’ve learnt that the best way to move forward is to do it all myself and speak directly to my supporters, this is how I manage to keep my own agency – despite what others are saying about me.” (Lady Ice, interview). These statements demonstrate that female musicians do not find it impossible to promote their work but that they engage in a lot of boundary work to delineate acceptable forms of self-promotion.

This section has highlighted some of the practical considerations arising in relation to the structuring of the industry. Taking the learning from this discussion, I now turn my attention to the notion of transcendence and resistance in relation to my practice.

I refer back to Butler's notion of performativity where she suggests "that no social formation can endure without becoming reinstated and that every reinstatement puts the structure in question at risk" (1997: 14); here she is suggesting that what makes a structure stable also makes it vulnerable and building from this, I explore instances of performative resistance.

BSN Residencies: an 'Affective Turn'

The final part of this chapter examines what Clough (2007) describes as the 'affective turn', which asks how we can theorise positive affect through alternative experiences and encounters which, in turn, facilitate new agential possibilities. The focus of this analysis is the BSN residency programme and guiding my enquiry is the concept of 'musical possible selves' as proposed by Creech, Varvarigou and Hallam (2020). Creech et al explain that this concept is a development of the theory of 'possible selves':

The idea of 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986) refers to ideal and hoped-for selves or alternatively selves that are feared and dreaded. These future-oriented selves have been described as the "motivational component of the self-system" (Frazier, Johnson, Gonzalez, & Kafka, 2002, p. 308) and may be understood as being integrally interrelated with other aspects of the self-concept (Erikson, 2007; Hock, Deshler, & Schumaker, 2006). (2020:11)

They develop this narrative in a music-specific context to explore how the practices and pedagogies of musical learning across the life course can shape individual perceptions of musical possible selves. They argue that musical possible selves are "dynamic, elaborate and salient narratives that are interdependent with the self-concept" (2020:13) and shaped by the way we experience the world. The concept of 'possible selves' and 'musical possible selves' serves as particularly useful in the context of this chapter as they "comprise an element of agentic, vicarious experience" (2020:12) and are predicated on making meaning within social and cultural contexts. I analyse the confluence of structure and agency in the context of my practice, drawing on this framework to better understand the role of BSN in supporting the development of musical possible selves and the agentic practices and

perspectives it engenders. The structure, in this case, is the soft infrastructure developed to create an all-female, 'safe space' for the residencies.

The BSN residencies were developed, on a fundamental level, to create space for female music creators to make new music with the support of each other and with the guidance of an inspirational Artistic Director. Creech et al reference Ibarra (1999), who suggests:

"...salience is strengthened when possible selves are constructed through the observation of role models, experimentation with provisional selves and evaluation of new conceptions against internal and external standards. In this way, highly elaborated and psycho- logically accessible possible selves develop" (2020:12)

This strengthens and extends the argument developed through chapter one in relation to the importance of role models.

Following the interviews and subsequent conversations with the artists who would go on to direct a residency, there were a number of factors beyond the practical and physical aspects that required consideration. The discussion below explores how the learning from my interviewees helped inform and shape the development of the BSN residencies in the context of agency and affect - and the outcomes and impact that it generated.

The BSN residency model is an evolution from the early artist-in-residency programmes, modern patronage schemes and artist colonies of the early twentieth century. The purpose of the residency is to create time and space for a musician to explore and develop their artistic practice, blurring the boundaries between community music and the music industry. Residencies take place over a five-day period, during which a group of early-career musicians, selected following an application process, participate in a creative and collaborative process of music-making, facilitated by a guest Artistic Director (AD). Guest ADs have included Beth Orton, with Afroduetsche, Nadine Shah, Stealing Sheep, Fatima Al Qadiri, Gwenno and Shiva Feshareki among others.

Reflecting on the interview materials and conversations with ADs while planning the residencies, there were a number of recurrent topics which had emerged as impacting artists' agency in a professional context. Loosely summarised, these themes comprised social expectation relating to gendered expectations of ability and behaviour and repetitive cultural discourses leading to issues of homogenisation. I began to consider what impact it would have on an artists' creative agency if these concerns were removed and the space was supportive, free of expectation and facilitated to challenge what exists through a process that emphasises agency, asserting authenticity in order to claim a more empowered identity, an 'affective turn'. Throughout the residency weeks I took direct observational notes, recording what I saw, heard and thought as the residency unfolded in order to better understand the value and purpose of this space in the agential development of the participant artists.

'Safe Space' structures

My premise in developing the 'safe space' dimension of the practice aligns with Björck (2011) whose exploration of spatial metaphors and concepts revolve around the idea that women need to 'claim space' in order to fully participate. Conceptually, I considered this to include the physical and phenomenological dimensions in order to create a new symbolic space where cultural practices can be repositioned to emphasise artistic agency and to support the realisation of the individual and collective aspirations. In cultivating this type of space, I referred to the work of Higgins (2012), who describes the space for community arts as:

“safety without safety, where the boundaries are marked to provide enough structural energy for the workshop to begin but care is then taken to ensure that not too many restraints are employed that might delimit the flow or the becoming of any music making” (2012:150).

By adopting this approach my motivation was to create a safe space where the artists would then feel free to take risks and to create work that might have previously been considered 'unsafe' or outside of social convention.

The introduction discussed the gendered social dynamics of many of the physical spaces which are critical in the development of music careers such as studios, rehearsal rooms and small venues. One of the primary considerations of the residency space is that it is all-female - all production staff, technical staff and support staff are female. We also specifically selected female documentary teams to film and photograph the work. This included a collaboration with Female Perspective, an agency of all-female photographers who capture images through a feminist lens rather than the traditional male gaze. This was important, given the conversation with artists around image and representation. Other material considerations were taken into account ahead of the residency, e.g. the participants were invited to make requests for support in relation to their access, social and musical needs. The spaces selected for the residencies were open, light and spacious with enough room for the whole group to be together as well as smaller 'breakout' rooms for smaller group or individual activity.

Recruitment to the residencies, begins with an open-call, where the AD states the intentions of the residency, gives details of any specific artistic concepts and invites artists to apply for a place²³. The participating artists were selected through a shortlisting process where the AD makes the final choice. Through the selection process attempts are made to recruit a musically balanced, highly skilled and collaborative group. The considerations in this process include practical aspects such as the mix of instruments, level of skill and breadth of experience as well as the applicants', ego-free, openness to collaboration. Anecdotally, I had noticed over the majority of BSN residencies that there were low numbers of drummers and bass players. This was not necessarily problematic, however, as it then created a space for the women to fill those traditionally male-dominated roles in their own way. I often observed artists creating their own beats and bass lines through unique means, using technology, hand percussion and stripped-back kits. This observation highlights the way this traditionally masculinist practice was being subverted using transgressive strategies to create a sound, a groove and ultimately a song which

²³ Brighter Sound offer a range of ways that artists can apply, from a written online form, to a verbal or video application. Unfortunately places are limited and so there is an effort to offer constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants and to have other, open access opportunities to signpost to.

was their own work, and which represented what they wanted to create. On the occasions where this happened, there was a clear sense of empowerment which visibly boosted the participants' confidence and productivity and strengthened their collaborative relationships. The concept of artistic ownership and identity is central throughout this analysis.

As is customary in community music practices, each residency starts with a welcome. Higgins suggests that "Through the welcome, the facilitator can create a pathway toward a genuine invention, an authentic and meaningful adventure" (2012:15). He goes on to say that the "giving of oneself and encouragement of others can be considered a type of hospitality and sits alongside other complementary attributes such as care and empathy" (2012:15) which are core values of this practice. In welcoming the group, the Artistic Director and myself would add congratulations to the participants, reminding them that they were selected through a competitive process and that they were present on the grounds of artistic merit. This was important to state in the context of feeling capable and able to participate as fully as possible. It relates back to the experiences divulged through the interviews, where multiple artists recalled encounters where their abilities were questioned on the grounds of their gender alone - because they did not fit the 'somatic norm'. As such it became a priority at the start of every residency to emphasise and value the range of musical talent that the participants had.

It was a further intention of the welcome session to ensure that the artists felt they were in a supportive space, and the approach to enabling this was to talk about why Brighter Sound was delivering the BSN programme; this often opened up a broader conversation about gendered experiences and helped to underscore the importance of collaborative participation and sensitivity to context. In order to further cultivate a safe space the participants were then asked three questions: firstly, to introduce themselves and their practice, secondly, to discuss what they will bring to the project and, thirdly but most importantly, to say what they need from others to enable them to participate fully, comfortably and confidently. These questions elicited some important themes and engendered a significant important awareness between the participants and wider staff team, with some using the space to discuss personal experiences, resulting insecurities and the wish for a non-judgemental environment

where they could feel nurtured and supported. Confidence was a recurrent theme in this discussion and then often an area of notable remark in the residency feedback and evaluation. It became apparent that the work was as much about bridging a 'confidence gap' as it was the gender gap.

In one particular residency, Sarah, a multi-instrumentalist, singer and Mum of two, applied to attend the project in order to rebuild her confidence following a ten-year career break. Sarah's story was indicative of a number of the themes this chapter has looked at. As an undergraduate she studied sound recording, the only female on her course. As such, whenever the class needed someone to record, they suggested Sarah. Sarah recounted how she would always go along with it, even though she wanted to be behind the scenes, but as this went on the males on her course would ask her to try and sound a bit more like 'a different' or a 'particular' female artist or to try and adopt a different style. Cumulatively, the impact of not being able to fully participate in the educational aspect of the course and then repeatedly being asked to mimic others instead of being herself, resulted in a total loss of confidence for Sarah and marked the start of her ten year career hiatus. This experience, which Sarah shared with the group, was of being systematically devalued and 'othered' within different music spaces. This series of external encounters and spatial affects became internalised and negatively impacted her confidence and feelings of self-worth. I highlight Sarah's story in particular as someone who over the course of the residency was exploring her new musical self while simultaneously rediscovering her lost musical self. I return to Sarah's journey later in the discussion.

A Framework for Creativity

To return to the work of Creech et al, alongside the aforementioned concept of the 'affective turn', my intention for the process of exploring new musical selves was to explore the impact of positive affects through the residency experience and for this to open up new agential possibilities for personal growth, exploration and claiming a more empowered musical identity. Creech et al suggest three areas of best practice in order to ensure that participants have the right balance of structure and agency in order to participate in the process. The first areas she highlights is that "music

programmes should have clear goals and guidelines within which participants can establish personally meaningful links and set personal goals” (2020:158).

There are a number of practical parameters that help form the structure of the residency, the 5-day timeframe and the intended outputs which, for most residencies, involve a live, ticketed performance. This might appear at odds with the safe space culture, but in my experience, I have found that adding this ‘unsafe’ element of risk and vulnerability in a supported context can be motivational, a theory supported by participant feedback. This adds an element of risk to the project but also gives it a strong focus and as Creech suggests, this shared goal is a key motivation for the participants.

Predominantly the goals and guidelines are provided by the AD, who provides a stable framework for participation through a loose structure of activity alongside a facilitated pedagogic approach that encourages learning through rather than from the process. In addition to this, the participants all tended to engage with a range of musical styles that oriented but did not limit the practice; these mostly correlated with the genre that the AD predominantly worked in.

Participants were encouraged to set personal goals in addition to contributing to the group goal of working towards a specific outcome. In the majority of residencies, the outcome is a performance. Some performances were more structured than others, and one particularly memorable residency, led by the sound artist, Gwenno, culminated in a semi-improvised silent disco performance at Sound City festival in May 2019. As audiences entered the performance space, they were given a programme note and set of wireless headphones where they could interchangeably listen to two sets of residency music. The music was inspired by a sense of place and people, with the artists collecting and experimenting with found sounds taken from Liverpool’s rich and varied communities and buildings. Using field recordings from across the city, and their own musical skills, the group created two distinct sets of music that were played simultaneously in this unique performance (unfortunately this was not able to be documented).

Despite the improvised nature of the show, the performance had been carefully crafted during the week by Gwenno. As one of the participants recounted:

The group was really intuitive and gelled right from the start. The process of preparing for the performance was a real journey that bonded us all together as a group. I don't think anybody expected the silent disco idea or thought we would do something as immersive sonically. I loved all the ideas and unique skills everybody brought along with them and having permission to let everything loose was very liberating.

(Abbie, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

Another participant added:

We barely rehearsed, a deliberate ploy from Gwenno to keep us in the moment on the night. I was nervous about improvisation but very satisfied with the music we made in the end, and I enjoyed the performance so much. I feel like I made a giant leap working on this project. Having dedicated time and space to think about music, and to explore my creativity was nothing short of blissful. I'm so grateful for the opportunity and the timing, it's really kickstarted my creativity and upped my motivation. I've come away feeling inspired to create and perform in different directions, and to keep being playful in my approach to my work. It was absolutely brilliant!

(Sarah, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

In just these two comments, which echo much of the other residency feedback, it demonstrates how the group dynamic was fundamental to working successfully within a flexible structure. The comments such as 'permission to let loose' are indicative of the freedom that the artists felt and the feelings of 'satisfaction' and of enjoying a 'blissful' process are indicative of how impactful the process had been. The artists reflected that even though the AD provided guidance throughout the process, she left space for individual ideas and experimentation to emerge through a carefully facilitated process. This concept is explored below in relation to the blending of individual and collective enactments of artistic agency.

Individual and Group Agency

The second aspect of best practice that Creech suggests is that “programmes should encompass opportunities for individual and group agency” (2020:158) which, as briefly acknowledged in the analysis above, is fundamental to the way that the BSN residencies are constructed. Over the course of the week, one of the main objectives for the AD is to ensure that everyone is comfortably and actively involved in the creation of at least one piece of music.

Individuals often commented on their own personal and professional development in the context of the residency. Some of the quotes in evaluations refer to individual benefits such as this from Ruth, a participant on the Nadine Shah residency in Newcastle

Through having the opportunity to be mentored by such a successful artist as Nadine, I have really developed my career in terms of skills but also understanding of the industry and I have gained in confidence at a point to launch my solo career I found that the residency came at the perfect time in my career as it gave me some structured time to focus on my solo project and to develop the platform to launch it from.

(Ruth, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

Other participants reflected on the impact it had on their personal relationship with their art:

I've had a difficult journey with music but following this residency I feel that I am getting to the point where I can reclaim my art and begin to enjoy it again.

(anonymous, evaluation feedback)

While these quotes demonstrate renewed focus and agency with regard to the individuals' musical ambition, the collaborative aspect of the process is what most participants acknowledged a benefit from, as Higgins (2012) says: “collaborative music making is community music’s pedagogic characteristic (2012:148). Quotes

such as the ones below, taken from project evaluations, highlight the impact that the community aspect of the project has had on the individuals involved.

[This residency] has provided an incredibly strong support network of talented individuals. This has allowed me to feel grounded and as if there is room for me. When you are a minority within a larger group or industry, you can draw such strength and encouragement from meeting and collaborating with other people like you, who are doing amazing things. Without collaboration or connection, it's easy to feel isolated or discouraged by the lack of representation on festival line-ups, label rosters or in the workplace (studios, venues, labels etc.). Through collaboration, those who are marginalised can learn first-hand that we ARE worthy and capable of achieving gender balance within the music industry, because you realise there are SO many brilliant artists who are women or non-binary, and the talent really is out there, it's just a case of joining up the dots. In working together, we're lifting each other up, supporting each other and shining a light on other artists who are women / from marginalised gender.

(Adina, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

And Kayla, who participated in the residency with Beth Orton (link [here](#), two slides) said,

It's so great seeing all these amazing women working within Brighter Sound, it makes the music scene seem much less scary and more like a community.

(Kayla, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

Overall, a coherent narrative was evident within these and other comments, highlighting the value of the group dynamic in the context of music making process, with deepening musical knowledge and understanding but also the considerable personal enjoyment, enhanced confidence and new connections that the process had generated. The quotes above are illustrative of the dynamism of the residency process and also encapsulate some of the energy and enthusiasm which is always palpable during these projects. The participant feedback suggests that these positive experiences are specific to the project and are engendered through the new,

affective influences and interactions that are opened up through the residency process.

This was particularly powerfully enacted in the residency that Shiva Feshareki led in Leeds (link [here](#), 3 slides. The residency was made up of twelve electronic artists, a mixture of producers, multi-instrumentalists playing through technology and three turntablists. The focus of the residency was experimentation based on the compositional techniques pioneered by left-field composers of the 1960s such as Daphne Oram and Pauline Oliveros. These included deep listening, improvisation and an exploration of spontaneity in performance. Over the residency week, the participant group spent a lot of time in sonic meditations and in states of musical trance through deep improvisation and experimentation. As the week went on, they grew together as artists with a heightened consciousness of each other as performers and the sound of the space they were occupying. The performance, at the opening night of Sounds Like THIS festival in Leeds was a powerful live improvisation.

This musical exploration impacted not only the sonic space but also the social space constituted by the participants. The process tested their imaginative power as individual and social actors to create a piece of music that existed for one night only. The levels of cooperation in the social space of the residency are always significant, with participants finding themselves in quite complex temporal and relational contexts. Very often this is the primary benefit that is reflected in the evaluation process: the opportunity to be in a space, collaborating intensively with like-minded, talented women. Shiva said of the process that her hope for the participants was “to find new or alternative ways of thinking and new ways of creating” (Shiva, interview). Through this process the musicians were testing and exploring how new ways of being and knowing can interact with the way in which agency is exercised to act and shape these collaborative practices. The shift that artists make in these workspaces moves from the reproductive to the transformative, mediated by the social and cultural world the musicians come to occupy.

Because we all were in a flow and in free space I was able to explore these areas with confidence, and I will continue to develop these ideas in my own projects

outside of the residency. I like the essence of the project about making a palette of sound to improvise with, it has inspired me to make my own sound library for further production. I feel like I can now see that how we make music is very much how we paint a painting. I didn't know it could be so easy working on your own and together at the same time

(Anya, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

While I have observed this transformation to some extent on all residency projects, the Shiva residency was a clear demonstration of the ways in which individual and collective agency are intertwined and can be explored and experimented with, from a non-gendered perspective.

Bypassing Gender Boundaries

The final aspect of Creech's analysis suggests

“while such programmes have ‘social aims’, participants should never therefore be stigmatised or drawn into music programmes with the aim of ‘normalising’ participants. Rather, the overarching musical experience should encompass and enable different ways of ‘doing’ and accessing music” (2020:158).

This reference feels particularly relevant to the wider narrative of this thesis, which is exploring what needs to change in order to generate better access to music and to break with the normative practices which marginalise women's contributions. The need for greater and broader representation of female artists and a societal embracing of their individualism has been highlighted as critical throughout the thesis and is one of the ways in which this practice is trying to reverse the gender gap.

The residency weeks aim to facilitate an undoing and redoing of gender by removing the gendered boundaries and associations that participants may have previously experienced. By doing this, the intention is to give the participating artists more latitude to gain agency over the creative space and to do things differently - not having to ‘bend their shape round rocks’. As discussed above, the safe and

supportive context is flexibly structured to engender freedom of the imagination. A participant once remarked on an evaluation form:

I've never felt more confident and I've never been more productive

(Hannah, BSN Participant, evaluation feedback)

The link between confidence and productivity appear to be closely connected in the residency context and translate tangibly into the way the work is devised, developed and performed. I also appreciated the re-gendering of the term 'productive' to align with the concepts of feeling enabled or empowered. Most BSN residency projects generate 45 minutes to one hour's worth of new music and the performances are proud and powerful enactments of female creativity. As well as supporting the artists to explore and express this artistic agency, the residencies also act as a platform to raise awareness of, and cause a disturbance to, the norms and social systems that create gendered barriers in music. The very striking sight of an all-female production featuring 12 – 15 women on stage is always remarked on by audience members. The way in which the performances unfold can receive an equal amount of attention.

One particularly physical performance was directed by the 3-piece band, Stealing Sheep. The participants collaborated with the band to develop an activist performance, the BSN Suffragette Tribute (link [here](#), three slides). Thompson (2015) describes activist arts as a 'hybrid technique of artistic and activist work that [seeks] to create disruption (2015:20) in the real world and in doing so foreground injustice and inequality. It is a practice that may be identified by the use of tactics for guerrilla cultural production (2015:20). The Suffragette Tribute was developed in this vein using pop up guerrilla projections and performance techniques to celebrate female creativity whilst conceptually representing stories of injustice. The piece was devised and developed in spring 2018, the year which I have referenced marked the centenary of some women getting the right to vote. As such, the band wanted to make a bold and confident statement with the residency. "This incredible anniversary has inspired us to create a new piece of music that will come alive during this residency. We want to make a bold statement, bring women together and get loud!" (Rebecca Hawley, interview).

The participant group was made up of drummers, percussionists and dancers from across Merseyside, who worked with Stealing Sheep and choreographer, Kate Cox, to create a cross-art form, procession piece. The performance premiered at Liverpool's Sound City festival before going on to tour festivals across the UK in summer 2018, including Smithfield 150 in London, End of the Road, Festival No. 6 and Head for the Hills, with the mission of bringing gender inequality into focus within the festival communities. The Guerilla tactics were implemented in the pop-up, disruptive nature of the performances. No performances were officially announced and the troop of 30 performers would appear to just turn up in the middle of festival spaces with incredible costumes, drums, percussion instruments, synthesisers and voices, ready to process. The costumes were lycra leotards and loose fitting smock tops, some with plain and others quite ornate masks covering their heads and faces. This was a trait of the Guerilla Girl, all-female, activist art movement which I refer to again in the next chapter. They often performed acts of disruption wearing gorilla masks, deliberately concealing their identities in order to place the focus on the issues they were raising rather than who they were or how they looked. This was important in a musical context too, reflecting on the interviews with Beth and Charlotte and the wider cultural discourse for female artists to physically (as well as musically) fit a particular type of image.

The performance had a profound impact on the audience whose anecdotal comments praised the high impact performance in making a strong musical and social statement. Similarly, the participant performers considered it a powerful experience:

[It was an] Amazing experience, I feel so lucky to have been involved in the project. The music industry (and actually the world!) is so patriarchal that it was just lovely to be creative in this group.

(Grace, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

Because I had the opportunities to work together and put my instruments in a different style of music, it makes me feel more confident about my musical ability. The result was so beautiful and powerful

(Milena, BSN participant, evaluation feedback)

The sense of having taken part in something powerful and liberating was observable in this and many of the other BSN residencies. With these conditions in place, artists have the freedom to explore and discover new dimensions and enactments of their creativity. They are free to do things differently and to imagine what their musical possible selves could be outside of the social constraints of the music industry.

Practice Reflections

These project reflections have offered several angles that ought to be of interest to ongoing and new debates around gender and music. Utilising Creech's framework I have illustrated ways in which a participatory arts practice can support female musicians to experience alternative affects, gain agency over space and explore new possibilities for their musical selves. By engaging with established and emerging artists in this enquiry we are collectively exploring and modelling socio-political and spatial imaginaries, challenging what exists and imagining new possibilities which disrupt expectations and position women centre stage and in control of their artistic agency. This demonstrates that women are not missing from the music industry, just operating in alternative spaces.

The work balances an outcomes and values-based approach where the fundamental 'safe space' values support the outcomes and objectives such as the performances. The values themselves also become one of the 'soft outcomes' of the residency, the feelings and affects that people encounter and interact with. Through this process meanings are transformed and a new way of knowing and of being is opened up.

As Sarah, the participant whose journey was discussed at the start of this section, took to the stage, solo, after her residency week with Beth Orton, Beth turned to me and said, "Here's our invisible woman come back to life". The residency provided the opportunity for Sarah to explore and experience her new musical possible selves and to rediscover her lost musical self.

Sarah's performance can be heard [here](#).

Agency Reflections

The analysis has centred around the concept of agency and served to reveal some of the systemic factors and social mechanisms which block the agential scope and capacity of female artists. Drawing on the work of feminist theorists including Butler, Walby and McNay, I have presented a framework from which the artistic enactments and frustrations of agency could be understood. This examination has opened up a number of theoretical perspectives which propose that the locus of agency lies beyond structure alone and deep within the individual. It has also highlighted contradictions within these perspectives which recognise female agency as being both limited and active. This is of interest to the thesis because it provides a more in-depth account of the factors which uphold the gendering of the industry.

The learning from my interviews with BSN participants, practitioners and guest artists offers a broad-based conceptualisation of resistance arising from the micro-level negotiations at an individual level and within the social space of music. The artists' reflections offered crucial insights into the ways their careers were both diminished and delegitimised through judgements on extra-musical factors such as perceived attractiveness and limited capabilities. On a more positive note we heard of artists' abilities to control their image, assert authenticity and generally claim a more personally empowered identity, gaining agency over space. The artists recounted stories which reflected the way they overcame their feelings as an outsider through hard work and dedication, pursuing a 'destiny' above all else and calmly correcting and moving past collective ignorance, despite the overwhelming emotions of anger and frustration.

Broadening out the discussion to explore the impact of alternative infrastructure and a facilitated 'safe space' on artistic agency, through the practice I have highlighted types of soft infrastructure to intervene in these accepted practices and offer safe spaces for performative resistance. This process considered positive affect through alternative experiences and encounters – which in turn facilitate new agential possibilities. These enactments of performative resistance illustrate women transcending repressive representations, inscribing their position in traditional genres and shaping and influencing new musical movements.

Through these insights it is my intention to progress this discourse on to a new path and to translate my understanding of access and agency into a strategy for change. The following chapter considers the implications for this work on a micro-, mezzo- and macro-level alongside the development of an activist strand to the BSN programme.

Chapter Three Change: Making Change in Practice and Policy

Introduction

From its initial inception Both Sides Now has been designed as both a participatory development programme and a research site. The development of the programme has been somewhat iterative, which is a common characteristic of practice-based research, asking questions, learning, amending, and working from what Smith and Dean call 'the unknown to the known' (2009:10). The process has provided a testbed for female-focussed working practices and has brought an under-represented feminist lens into the conversation about change in the music industry. The insights which have emerged have instigated patterns of enquiry and opened up new perspectives, rationalising my practice as a form of research with the intention to contribute to knowledge construction in this area and also to effect change. This dual responsibility is concomitant with the feminist principles which underpin this thesis, as Reinharz (1992) suggests "For many feminists, research is obligated to contribute to social change through consciousness-raising or specific policy recommendations" (1992:251). This plural approach has centred around two critical questions driven by my practice, *what* needs to change, and *how*?

The guiding framework of this enquiry has been the BSN [Theory of Change](#). The theory proposed a baseline analysis of the context, conditions and issues that affect women in the early stages of their musical development, and hypothesised the sequential changes anticipated as being necessary to support change on a micro, mezzo and macro level. While the Theory requires specific conditions in order to address more structural factors, this study has explored strategies that prioritise individual action and practice-led interventions in order to synthesise individualist and systemic approaches to cultural change. As Ridgeway and Correll (2004) state, gender is a multilevel system of difference and inequality and operates on multiple levels "gender involves cultural beliefs and distribution of resources at the macro level, patterns of behaviour and organisational practices at the interactional level, and selves and identities at the individual level" (2004: 510-511).

The previous chapters have focussed on the first two pillars of the Theory of Change, exploring barriers relating to access in relation to education (in its broadest

sense) and career entry points. This has been developed through the second chapter narrative of *agency* which presented an empirically grounded account of change on an individual level exploring micro-level negotiations and localised spaces of resistance. Further extending that thread, this chapter offers a broad-based conceptualization for making change, uncovered through a process of feminist organising and enactments of what Hemmings (2012) refers to as 'affective solidarity'. I am examining these questions at a micro, mezzo and macro level.

The investigation has three parts. The first part of the chapter reflexively explores the BSN strategies of activism and methods of organising . This focuses on the development and delivery of a public engagement strand to the programme in the form of Open Space workshops and a conference event. Drawing on the analysis of Owen (1997) I examine the conditions which enabled a feminist activism to emerge through the project and pursue a deeper understanding of the 'what and how' of change. Leading on from this, the second part of the chapter positions BSN within the wider political discourse of inclusion through the process of making manifest the case for change as articulated through the BSN events. My analysis examines the genre of manifesto writing and polemic approaches to what Ebert (2003) describes as 'transformative textuality' drawing additionally on the work of Ahmed (2017) and Fahs (2020). The final section of the chapter draws this together through the crowd-sourced BSN manifesto which puts forward five themes for making-change. The Manifesto is an essential part of the practice, bridging the relationship between the artistic and the activist practices within the programme. The aim of the manifesto is to present a blueprint for change-making and to offer evidence-based recommendations to project stakeholders, industry partners and policy-makers as to how this can be implemented. The process of developing the manifesto and its key findings were discussed at policy-level as part of a symposium and roundtable working lunch with MEPs at the European Parliament in October 2019. It will remain a legacy document to the programme with the intention of supporting change-making practices now and in the future. Using the Manifesto as an analytical framework the chapter ends with a critical examination of the themes offering new knowledge generated through BSN, in dialogue with other contemporary strategies for change. These include quota programming, pledges and award ceremonies. A diagram

detailing a broad typology of these strategies can be found in the digital portfolio [here](#) and [here](#).

Affective Solidarity: Both Sides Now Open Space and Conference

Throughout the thesis I have discussed and justified the positioning of my practice as being socially-engaged and activist in nature but as the BSN project developed this commitment has become stronger and more visible. This area of analysis focuses specifically on two specific strategies in the BSN programme which utilise elements of safe space, collective space and consciousness raising to cultivate a feminist practice of change-making through the Open Space and conference events.

Peaceful gathering of people with a shared or common interest sits at the heart of stimulating activism and the history of feminist movements demonstrates the power of organising as a mode of resistance against the effects of patriarchy, misogyny and sexism. As different feminist waves have given way to different modes of ‘doing’ feminism, I have approached the process of organising in my practice through the principles associated with fourth wave feminism. In aligning with this contemporary movement, it has been critical to move away from the previously discussed binary definitions in relation to biological sex and also the relationship between genders which have historically been reduced to oppressor and repressed (Butler, 1990; Mahmood, 2011; Fraser, 2016; Ahmed, 2017). One of the key characteristics of the fourth wave movement has been a shift towards individualism, giving greater prominence to intersecting inequalities pertaining to protected characteristics but also more nuanced areas of difference in lived experienced.

Picking up on this notion of individualism and difference, it has always been an ambition for BSN to be an open and responsive programme that is guided by need, is open to learning and values different ways of knowing. Taking this as a starting point in my planning, I wanted to facilitate a public conversation about change through my practice, grounded in what Hemmings (2012) describes as ‘affective solidarity’. Hemmings developed the concept of *affective solidarity* as a way of moving away from the deep-rooted, identity-based politics of feminist transformation to propose a mode of engagement that embraces natural difference and difficulty from the point of *affective dissonance*. Hemmings’ work challenges what has

“historically been an over-individualised account of subjectivity or a more determinist account of the social world and the way in which it can be transformed” (2012:148).

Hemmings draws on the work of Probyn (1993), as discussed in the introduction, to ground her approach in *feminist reflexivity*, a distinction between an embodied sense of self and the self we are expected to be in social terms, between the experience of ourselves over time and the experience of possibilities and limits to how we may act or be. By introducing the concept of affect Hemmings suggests that it is possible to integrate an account of experience that is dynamic rather than essentialising and, in turn, to engender alternative feminist perspectives and engage others in a discourse from which they may previously have felt excluded. This transitions from *affective dissonance* into *affective solidarity* and proposes a route through which the individual experience can be brought into a collective feminism.

Reflecting on this in the context of BSN, I consider Hemmings statement:

“dissonance has to arise if a feminist politics is to emerge, and for that reason it may even have the status of a universal condition” (2012:156). This prompted me to explore a methodological approach to the activism strand which sought to enhance knowledge and create the conditions for transformation through an engagement with others which doesn’t centre on shared identity but rather on a shared desire for transformation. Elaborating on this, Walby (2011) states that there have been notable changes in the ways in which feminist projects manifest from “protest to engagement” (Walby, 2011:57), With these considerations in mind, I knew that I needed to develop a process that would enable me to reach into a diversity of communities and organisations to engage people in a collaborative exploration of what needs to change.

Guided by this principle, I was led to the concept of Open Space Technology, a method of facilitation which originated through the work of Owen (1997). Owen’s practice was developed as a result of a deeply vested experience producing a major conference, at the end of which people reflected that the time spent on coffee breaks had been the most productive. Owen set out to research into the mechanisms of human gatherings in order to create what he described as a ‘conference in coffee-break mode’ (1997: 6). Inspired by a 4-day, self-organising rites of passage celebration in a village in Liberia, Owen distilled four simple mechanisms by which

the rites of passage ceremony was built and through which he hoped to achieve the productivity of his coffee-break conference model. Firstly, he observed participants gathering in a circle, which he highlighted as the geometry of open human communication. He then observed anticipation and people pausing to take a breath before the service began. The final part of Owen's analysis identified an informal process of self-organising through the ceremony, prompted by the presence of a community bulletin board and a market-place setting which enabled people to bring their ideas together. "That is all there is," Owen states, "Come to a circle, take a deep breath, create a bulletin board, open a marketplace, and go to work. It really is that simple" (1997:15) . From my perspective the critical principle in this process is the need for shared interest as a starting point and this aligns with Holman et al, who suggest that Open Space runs on two fundamentals: 'passion and responsibility'. In delivering the BSN Open Space strand, those were two principles that needed to be harnessed.

To deliver this strand of the programme I worked with an organisation called The Hub,²⁴ a collective of cultural consultants, researchers and trainers who are experienced with the use of Open Space Technology and were advocates for its power to explore a particular issue. In order to be effective, the series needed to be framed by a strong question which set the tone for other contributions. In exploring the potential for socially engaged arts to open up a new space for cultural politics, Hope (2017) suggests that "in order to dissent, you have to know both what you are dissenting from and have a sense of what you are proposing as an alternative" (2017:218). This perspective helped to frame the Open Space process, relating back to the questions which lay at the heart of the programme – what needs to change and how. In order to explore this in more detail, we worked from the premise that the potential for change starts through questioning and, relating back to my theory of change, requires action at different levels. By entitling the series 'Making Gender Equality A Reality – What Can We All Do?', it was our hope that the event invitation would be perceived as open and action-focussed.

We staged three [Open Space events](#) in Spring 2018, the first one in the venue and bar Constellations in Liverpool, the second in the performance space at Manchester

²⁴ <https://thehubuk.com>

Central Library and the third in Duke Street creative hub in Leeds. We provided childcare, entertainment and refreshments at each event. The series was constructed in the same way. The rooms were set out in a circle of chairs, and in the centre of the circle were paper and pens. On the wall, we hung an empty timetable with the timings of the different sessions on the left and the various discussion areas at the top. The facilitation of Owen's methodology enabled self-organisation, self-reflexivity and engendered a shared ownership of the space, the problem(s) and the responsibility to explore a solution. The process also engendered flexible and fluid forms of individual resistance that, over the course of the events, would become collectively organized.

The events were attended by over 200 people of all genders, ages and backgrounds with a range of experiences, including touring musicians, event producers, people who work at labels, publishers, young people, educators and journalists. It was particularly encouraging to see the male attendees comfortably engaging with feminist debate. The events were impassioned, constructive and cultivated a sense of togetherness through mutually affirming political connections, evidencing the presence of Holman's 'passion and responsibility'. The discussions that emerged varied from normalised sexism to workplace discrimination, from issues of isolation to concerns around dominating culture and toxic masculinity. There was a recurrent tension acknowledged between the social parameters of creative work and the struggles to maintain professional working relationships in social environments. Parenthood and the challenges posed by self-employed, non-traditional hours; precarious work was also a visibly popular conversation. The education representatives also raised the lack of diversity in the curriculum and gendering of roles in the classroom, some of which is reflected in chapter one, and the need to acknowledge these critical early influences in the wider discourse around industry change. With the focus on Northern Cities the issue of regionalism arose on a number of occasions, relating to the disproportionate location of roles in London and the role of geography as a barrier to accessing progression and also to accessing best practices. The industry of the North is small and, for the most part, independent, populated by DIY start-ups which have evolved organically. There was a powerful, emotional intensity to the conversations in the elicitation of this embodied knowledge, a process which Hemmings positions at the heart of affective solidarity.

For me personally, the process invoked a deeper level of responsibility than I had previously anticipated – the responsibility to amplify the voices of this vibrant enactment of solidarity and build on this mobilisation to create change.

Both Sides Now Conference

The next step in mobilising the BSN movement involved further organising, firstly to link and categorise the themes from the Open Space events and then to develop a platform to explore them further. Recognising the need to engage and involve actors at all levels of the music industry ‘system’ for the next phase in the change process, I employed a more formal methodology and programmed the Both Sides Now conference (full programme [here](#)) using the Open Space themes.

A historic trait of feminist organising involves bringing together assembling the personal and institutional, so in addition to our open invitation approach, we invited key delegates and speakers from across the landscape of music, including BSN partners, educators, artists, and membership and funding bodies. Being mindful of Owen’s experience, the event was planned to step outside the traditional conference format and offer opportunities for participants to engage in interactions with key stakeholders from across the sector. The process was structured, and stakeholders convened to create inclusive inter-disciplinary dialogues, incorporating the perspectives, experience and expertise of participants from all relevant professions, disciplines and practices.

The conference was a dynamic half-day event which took place at the Sage in Gateshead on 2nd July 2018. As with the Open Space events, the narratives that emerged involved two modes of feminist organizing, what Hemmings (2012) refers to as the politics of experience and empathy, affirming the need for top-down intervention driven from a bottom-up perspective which truly takes into account lived experiences at the level of the individual. The awakening of a communal, feminist consciousness to address different axes of oppression had created an empirically grounded understanding of the identities and needs of women in music from the North. According to Holman et al (2007), “what’s needed for effective, sustainable change are sessions in which people collectively explore each other’s assumptions,

seek and expand common ground, shape a desired future, and jointly take ownership of the solutions to the issues” (2007:99), so, to close the conference we asked all participants to contribute to our Postcard from the Future takeaway. The Postcard from the Future segment invited everyone to write individual change-making statements pitched into the future to implement into their lives or practices which would make a difference in the fight for equality, highlighting the power and importance of micro level change. This was an equally powerful process in a similar mode to the Open Space in that it was placing ownership and responsibility with the individual, a strategy discussed in chapter two.

We received nearly 350 Postcards from the Future (some illustrative examples [here](#) for three slides). The following examples illustrate the breath of perspectives which had been reflected through the process.

I pledge to ensure my daughter never feels like she can't do something because of her gender

I will call-out the sexism I have previously laughed off

I promise to question people who are surprised that I am the bands manager, I will ask why they feel this is such an unlikely scenario. Challenging misconceptions and making people (mostly men) think before speaking!!!

My pledge is to feedback the experience from this Open Space at our next senior management meeting and pose the same question 'what can we all do' to tackle this

I will always dress the way I want to dress on stage and make sure my on-stage persona is true to me, not societal expectations of me

My future action is to be more encouraging to girls in my music lessons and to seek out more female role models!

These postcard themes are broadly representative of the key factors identified within the Theory of Change, and complement the understanding of the micro, mezzo and macro level of intervention required. The dual approach of combining new research and public engagement has opened up a rich space between theory and practice and has drawn experiences to the surface which lay bare our vulnerabilities not only as women but as a society which has, for too long, failed to consider the female lens. They invoke an important and productive type of feminist politics which turns lived experience into a force for social change, a process which I am committed to moving forward through the work of this programme, through the work of this research and through the next phase in the development of this activism strand, the BSN Manifesto.

Manifesto Making

The final section of this chapter brings together the combined learning around change-making and explores a theoretically informed methodology based on the above analysis and recurrent themes or ideal types of activist practice. Having reflected on what needs to change, I examine the polemic of manifesto-making as a way to represent how the music industry could achieve greater equality.

During the process of delivering BSN I have returned to the work of Ahmed (2017), whose exploration of 'becoming feminist' is about making sense of what doesn't make sense. Ahmed's journey is shaped through cumulative, difficult experiences of "being bruised by structures that are not even revealed to others". It is through this, she suggests, "that we gain the energy to rebel. It is from what we come up against that we gain new angles on what we are against" (2017:255). She states that this process of carrying an increased weight and responsibility born from unseen injustices unfolds into action a 'break', a 'snap', 'a manifesto': "A manifesto is a feminist snap" (2017:255). Over the course of this process I have been brought to the point of my 'feminist snap'. Through the process of 'feminist reflexivity' I have recounted shared experiences and anecdotal observations of lived discrimination, casual sexism and outright misogyny. I have developed a deeper and more determined motivation to make a change. The most powerful 'takeaway' from the Open Space and conference were the emotions the events evoked; the passion,

vulnerability, frustration, anger and, perhaps most importantly, hope. While I cannot do justice to the variety of individual experiences discussed, I endeavour to extrapolate a clear link between the evidence of lived experiential issues, the need for change and the proportionate solutions or recommendations that will generate further debate with regards to change-making. The genre of manifesto writing felt like an appropriate medium for this process in that it is rooted in political gravitas but can also be provocative, dynamic and energetically charged through emotion and experience. In order to begin this process, I examine key characteristics of this genre of writing, reflecting on important manifestos of the past and drawing on the analysis of Ahmed (2017), Ebert (2003) and Fahs (2020).

The tangle of outpourings which I tasked myself to coherently curate can be succinctly described in the words of Ebert as “the emotion of struggle” (2003:121). Ebert goes on to say:

“The manifesto is writing in struggle. It is writing on the edge where textuality is dragged into the streets and language is carried to the barricades. It is writing confronting established practices in order to open up new spaces for oppositional praxis.” In short, “the manifesto is the genre of change-writing, of transformative textuality and the textuality of transformation” (2003:153).

Ahmed adds to this, stating: “A manifesto is required when a struggle is necessary to give expression to something” (2017:252) which in the case of BSN is the challenge-faced by Northern female musicians. Ahmed describes the process of manifesto making as “a declaration of intent”, going on to say that “a manifesto not only causes a disturbance, it aims to cause the disturbance” (2017:250) an intention which closely resonates with the aim for BSN in disrupting what is expected of women in music and raising consciousness of the challenges and inequalities they face.

Traditionally, the manifesto is almost exclusively a declaration of political intent catalysing some of the most significant movements across Europe in modern political history. For example, Paine’s (1776) political tract *Common Sense* galvanised a movement towards the *struggle* for American independence and the subsequent establishment of republican democracy. Mary Wollstonecraft wrote the

first major feminist tract, *The Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in 1792 in reaction to the equalitarian values emerging through the American and French revolutions. Marx and Engels' (1848) *The Communist Manifesto* gave voice to the working class struggle, launching socialist ideals across Europe. While the genre remains most closely associated with political parties vying for electoral success, the perspectives from which manifestos are written has broadened across a range of movements, often synergising parallels between seemingly unrelated areas, in particular the art manifesto and the political manifesto. This hybrid approach has resonance with my area of focus as there are feminist, artistic, social and political connotations to the struggle I wish to represent. The fusion of art and political change is not uncommon in manifesto writing, as demonstrated by the politically active poet and founder of the futurist movement Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, who founded the Futurist Political Party in Italy, or the Vorticist Wyndham Lewis lending public support to the Suffragettes. The more recent Guerilla Girl movement of feminist artists developed a manifesto which came in the form of a thirty-poster portfolio of slogan-based art works released in the late eighties through to the early nineties. In music the Riot Grrrl movement of the nineties initiated a manifesto, entitled *History Is A Weapon*, first published in 1991 in a Zine. Their 16-point document presents a rationalised vision for gender equality through, with and beyond music. With a focus on a feminist 'hybrid' model my analysis explores a range of manifestos, guided by Ahmed's advice that "in order to write a manifesto you should read manifestos" (2017:252). The process explores common characteristics, tone and style of presentation used to give expression to the voices of those stripped of social and political power.

According to Fahs (2020), "Feminist manifestos exploded onto the scene from 1967–1991, a period marked by rampant sexism, emerging feminist resistance, consciousness raising and collective organising" (2020:5). The manifesto has been an important mode of communication for early feminists, enabling them to bypass routes which had historically been denied to them. Fahs describes the late 1960s as "a cultural zeitgeist moment that recognised women as finally, fed up and truly enraged", making it possible for women "to push back against cultural pressures for politeness and respectability" (2020:10). The process of manifesto making is a knowledge-making practice which has been and continues to be an important way of documenting place and time. While the tone, brand and issues of feminism have

shifted since the 1960s, there is a similar feminist zeitgeist 'quality' to the climate at the time of writing, a re-awakening of feminism and other critiques of the politics of exclusion standing in stark contrast to the post-feminist aftermath. A cultural shift has started as evidenced through the typology but, as yet, it is not seismic.

Fahs' analysis provides a thematic orientation of famous, infamous and lesser-known manifestos from the late sixties through to the 'twenty-teens'. She describes the process of manifesto making as: "combining the romantic quality of dreamers and artists imagining something new and whimsical together with the crushing power of a Mack truck bulldozing over established traditions, trashing accepted modes of thought and eradicating the past" (2020:4). This quote highlights the dual approach of bringing together the 'sociological imagination' with the practice of feminist 'againstness' as a driving principle to highlight often radical intentions in this highly-charged genre of thinking and writing. From this analysis I draw out a number of key characteristics which inform my process of creating and curating the Both Sides Now Manifesto.

Declaration of Intent and Feminist Reimagining

At a very practical level a manifesto must first and foremost state its ideas and goals, creating direction, focus and purpose. Within this context the narrative is positioned to present the root causes of the *struggle* and propose solutions. Ebert states: "The manifesto is aimed at de-writing 'revolution' as a thing of the past and rewriting it as a viable strategy for the present" (2003:557). Working with the objective to be instrumental in contributing to a long-term, sustainable change, this section of a manifesto enables the writer to examine theories and instances, to ask questions but beyond this also to propose practical objectives and strategies. The data gathered through the Open Space, conference and postcards had provided the building blocks for this process. My task with the BSN manifesto was to distil the reason and ideology necessary to propose a way forward, utilising knowledge of and from the past and present to reimagine alternative possibilities in the future

Consciousness Raising

A recurrent theme throughout this chapter and the driving motivation behind any manifesto is to make public what has previously been private and to amplify the cause for which it stands. This focus has been clear in the examples which have previously been examined and perhaps is most explicit in Firestone's (1970) *The Dialectic of Sex*, which states: "our chief task at present is to develop female class consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all our institutions" (1970:5). Firestone was a central figure in the second wave, radical feminist movement and is credited with coining the slogan 'the personal is political'. Her Manifesto goes on to state, "Before we can act to change a situation, however, we must know how it has arisen and evolved", referencing the work of Marx and Engels. Her work, which traces the sex class analysis back to its biological roots, is regarded as the first book of the women's liberation movement to put forward a feminist theory of politics and is a landmark publication in the evolution of feminist thought.

In more contemporary strategies this issue relates as much to the medium and profile as the content. This can be seen in examples such as the afore-mentioned Guerilla Girl poster campaign, which pursued a highly memorable, instantly recognisable visual mode of communication. In recent British politics the manifesto of the 2016 Brexit referendum Leave campaign was immortalised through slogans plastered upon an infamous 'big red bus'. As discussed earlier, the use of physical space or objects can now be augmented or bypassed completely through the use of digital media. The speed at which people can subsume and respond to an issue is part of the effectiveness of this 'tool'. Individuals can shape public conversation, subsume a movement and put themselves in the front and centre of a powerful narrative.

Collective Voice

A point of tension across all the manifestos in this analysis is the use of the 'we' pronoun to communicate a collective voice and shared identity of the people which the manifesto aims to represent. This relates to an unresolved issue within feminism, as the previous section discussed. Feminism is a broad, multifaceted political orientation and while recognising the importance of collective voice within a

manifesto, there is also a significant need to recognise women's diversity. Hemmings states: "Different feminist standpoint theories emphasise different aspects of this over-arching frame, but importantly all of these include the element of struggle as central" (2011:155). With the BSN manifesto it is my hope that the underpinning principles of affective solidarity will engender a broad ideological variety united through a desire for change.

Fahs describes the Manifesto as a call to arms but also a call of solidarity and unification, reinforced through the use of the 'we' pronoun. She highlights examples of explicit inclusivity in a number of manifestos, including *The Redstockings Manifesto* (1969), which emerged from the women's liberation movement and states: 'We identify with all women. We define our best interest as that of the poorest, most brutally exploited women' (2020:209). It goes on to say that "Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc) are extensions of male supremacy" (2020:207), drawing unity against male domination. However, where the majority of feminist manifestos consider themselves to be inclusive there are a number of examples of manifestos which have developed as a result of women not having their voice recognised within existing publications – for example, the *Black Woman's Manifesto*. This manifesto, written by the Third World Woman's Alliance, rejected the limited idea of the female as a "matriarchal villain or a step stool baby-maker" and sought to give voice to the black woman marginalised by the predominantly white (and wealthy) feminist movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. There are other examples of manifestos which represent the rights of women of colour, reflecting a diversity of issues from white supremacy to colonial gender violence, all of which discount the notion of a 'common oppression'. In the case of the 1970 Black Movement and Women's Liberation, Linda La Rue highlights the 'headliner generalities' of rhetoric and propaganda which don't reflect the true difference, stating that "with few exceptions, the American white woman has had a better opportunity to live a free and fulfilling life, both mentally and physically, than any other group in the United States, with the exception of her white husband" (2020:301). There are a number of other examples of marginalised feminist manifestos which have emerged, including lesbian and queer manifestos, the body positive Fat Liberation Manifesto, manifestos which are pro-abortion and manifestos

to support the rights of Sex Workers. While intersectionality is an important feature for the BSN Manifesto to grapple with, it represents a broader issue within contemporary feminism, in that by unifying you lose space for individuality. The fact that the BSN manifesto is crowd-sourced is important and finding a way to truly and fairly represent and advance the voice of all the BSN, Open Space and conference contributors was challenging: the process required a focussed specificity and an acknowledgement of limitation.

Tone of Voice and Outlook

According to Ebert, “although these are different registers of manifesto and polemics, they are all militant change-writings: they are all aimed at transformation of the existing social organizations” (2003:555). Developing this theory, Fahs’ analysis suggests that the tone of the manifesto tends to be direct and authoritarian and is often powerful, defiant and angry. Anger, as a tone, was a key feature of the manifestos of the 1960s and 1970s, in particular where an uncensored rage brought a ‘freshness’ to debates around equality. This was particularly evident in Valerie Solanas’ SCUM Manifesto of 1967, which, in short, proposed an overthrowing of society by the ‘better chromosomed’ and a complete elimination of the male sex, suggesting that “Every man deep down, knows he’s a worthless piece of shit” (2020: 219). This was an important shift in the voice of women, moving away from being polite and proper into a more disobedient domain. This was a particular feature of the radical feminist movement, which sees women reclaiming ownership of language. This is notably evident in the Redstockings Manifesto, which states: “we are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants and cheap labour” (2020: 219).

In a similar vein, Ahmed’s powerful *Killjoy Manifesto* was named as a response to people who call out sexism, stating “A killjoy is someone who kills joy because of what she says exists” (2017:252). Since Ahmed’s observation in 2017 there has been a slight shift in the accessibility and availability of forums for people to ‘killjoy’. The afore-mentioned digital spaces, in particular the #MeToo and #EverydaySexism movements, have created arenas for women to call out their daily experiences of sexism and misogyny. This is a distinct shift in tone between previous waves of

feminism, harnessing a solidarity in a strategy of making visible this often invisible anger and frustration. In the context of the BSN manifesto it is important to acknowledge the evolving tone of feminism and explore ways to capture the visceral frustration whilst utilising the evidence elicited through the activism strand to propose a fresh and progressive outlook, encapsulating the tone of destiny illustrated by the postcards from the future. Fahs states: “The manifesto does not look back, it looks forward proposing a new, innovative and sometimes radical vision” (2020:21). As such it must be energising and compelling, forging new ground and leaving little or no room for disagreement.

Manifesto Making Summary

From this deconstructive perspective Ebert describes the manifesto and its polemic as a practice for “re-activating questions” and for “conceptually and physically rethinking a situation” (2003:557). Utilising this framework to shape and structure the BSN manifesto, the text should strive to find a way forward, exploring the relationship between the past, present and future and using history as a guide to reimagine alternative possibilities for women in music. The approaches discussed above do this in a variety of ways, from ensuring the visibility of women in music and celebrating their achievements to providing educational and professional or creative development opportunities. They populate gaps in our understanding of women’s contributions and bring meaningful conversations about equality into the public realm, asserting woman’s position as part of the music landscape by normalising their place in the classroom curriculum, to the boardroom, to the stage. In the final part of this chapter I translate the findings from the Open Space and conference into Manifesto form.

The Both Sides Now Manifesto

In October 2019, I was invited to be part of a delegation from the Mayoral City Regions of Manchester and Liverpool²⁵, to attend a series of events at the European Parliament in Brussels and discuss gender equality in the arts. The first event was a

²⁵ The delegation was led by the Culture teams at Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

symposium entitled Deeds Not Words (in acknowledgement of Manchester's strong history as home to the Suffragette movement) and was made up of panel discussions, presentations and performances. The following day the delegation was invited to a roundtable working lunch with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) Culture Committee. At both events I was given the opportunity to present and discuss my research and learning through the Both Sides Now programme. In the lunch, hosted by Julie Ward, Labour MEP for the North West England region, I recounted the process of crowd-sourcing the manifesto and we discussed the value of a policy initiative informed by a practitioner-led response to the challenge of gender equality. Through this discussion we collaboratively shaped a number of recommendations from the document that were carried forward into the planning for the Culture Committee's next seven-year strategy. A thick description, summary of the recommendations as evolved from the manifesto and documentation of the process and events can be found [here](#)

The Both Sides Now Manifesto was developed through analysis of the 342 Postcards from the Future, crowd-sourcing qualitative data that draws on a broad range of affects to narrate the discursive landscape of the contributors and their subjective experiences. The postcards were reviewed following the Open Space and conference events with each individual pledge logged then coded and thematically linked. This approach allowed me to fully explore the common themes amongst the breadth of experience and emotion which were viscerally represented, each postcard with its unique inflections but in which recurring concerns and experiences appear again and again.

While it was not possible to reflect every comment from the postcard initiative the five areas identified as the strongest emerging priorities for the participants were subsequently taken as the themes for the manifesto. The analysis focused on the overarching, practice-driven questions of the thesis: what needs to change and how,

1. Education
2. Artist Development
3. Live Music
4. Parenthood and the freelance 'workplace'

5. Leadership

The manifesto provides a rationale for each theme it identifies as a priority for change, which originates from the analysis of Postcards from the Future. Other aspects of the practice research are also drawn on within each theme, making connections between the qualitative interviews, ethnographic observations and secondary sources. The proposals of the manifesto are further contextualised by the strategies and practices ([overview](#) and [typology](#)) of other contemporary initiatives and interventions that seek to equalise the music industry. The Manifesto recommendations and pledges are analytically framed by the BSN Theory of Change through which I offer tangible recommendations for change on a micro, mezzo and macro scale.

The first two themes of Education and Artistic Development were the focus of Chapters One and Two where they were discussed in relation to access barriers and in the development and delivery of the practice. In this section I briefly reiterate the summary findings and address them in relation to the manifesto's 'call to action'. I focus greater attention on the three areas of Live Music, Parenthood and Leadership which are of equal importance in the narrative of change-making but have been less present as they sit on the periphery of my practice. Acknowledging this, I reflect on the work of Breen (2008) who states: "The market-oriented recording industry operates in a parallel universe to the arts and is largely defined by the process of commodification" (2008: 203). Recognising the limitations of my practice to apply interventionary strategies into the space dominated by global recording companies, the manifesto offers a critically engaged foundation from which to build a counter hegemony. I position a discussion on each of the themes as an epilogue to the manifestos statement of intent.

The tone of voice reflects the key features of a manifesto as outlined above. It starts with a declaration of intent and proceeds with the purpose of amplifying the voice and the cause it represents. It respectfully uses the 'we' pronoun to reflect the crowd sourced process and align with the methodological culture of care that ensures these experiences and ideas are being heard. Throughout the document the tone of voice remains direct and progressive, looking forward through a lens of feminist possibility

and offering a multi-level proposition for change-making which takes account of large themes where structural or societal change is required, alongside the smaller and more nuanced areas of micro-level change.

A full version of the manifesto is available [here](#) and below is a summarised version which outlines the key aspect as referenced above. The five thematic priorities for change are discussed below, alongside relevant extracts from the document

Both Sides Now Manifesto: A Case for Change

1. Education (see manifesto [here](#))

As discussed in chapter one, popular music is culturally central to many young people facilitating the formation of musical and social bonds. This is where Creech (2020) suggests we make sense of our 'musical selves'. This is also a time where the masculinisation of traditional and popular music is normalised and as Green (1997) suggests "musical meanings, practices and discourses are produced and reproduced as gendered" (1997:8) . She goes on to say that it should come as no surprise when students choose not to participate in "opportunities to take part in practices dominated by the opposite sex: for in offering the opportunities we ride roughshod over the very delineation of gender differences in which pupils desire to invest, or feel compelled to invest" (1997:187).

Through my practice I have observed male domination and need for separate all-female groups and through this thesis I have discussed the cultural constraints on the music-making practices of young women, making it appear as a predominantly male activity and limiting the roles and opportunity for young women to explore and experiment creatively. The roots, tropes and persistence of gender inequality are present throughout childhood in popular culture, the content of the music curriculum and the practices and expectations of the 'hidden curriculum' (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Thorne, 1995; Cohen, 1997; Bayton, 1998).

Having reflected on the benefits of 'safe space' participatory practices the research has shown that such activities and gender-specific projects can have a positive effect

on the musical development of those participating. This process facilitates the creation of a new symbolic space where girls and young women can feel empowered, where artistic practices can be explored and identities can be negotiated, represented and constituted. Grassroots activists projects as shown with Both Sides Now can be seen to offer support, mentorship, creative exploration and acknowledgement or ownership of the work created. These are prevalent themes throughout the thesis and can be understood as both common and significant as a strategy for change.

While there aren't any specifically education-focussed projects developed to support young women aged under eighteen in the typology (which is not a complete compendium of initiatives), the models of practice relating to the safe space, all-female space and community building practices would lend themselves to application with younger aged participants.

The manifesto calls for more opportunities for girls and young women to make music together, greater connections to be forged between music education and the music industry and the development of a curriculum with greater diversity and visibility of female role models.

2. Artist Development (see manifesto [here](#))

The concept of 'artist development' is a recently acquired remit of the funded arts sector and has been less prevalent at record labels since the streamlining of the industry around the digital model of distribution. Many funded, and non-funded, organisations now play a crucial role in supporting artists to transition into professional or semi-professional careers. These alternative learning sites, such as the project spaces created by Brighter Sound have been suggested as now doing much of the pedagogic and emotionally supportive work traditionally carried out in education (Dimitriadis, 2001). The informal spaces, as discussed in the Agency chapter, can also be regarded as a 'safe space' for emerging artists to test and develop their own sense of identity and cultural meaning.

Strategies for addressing gender equality within this realm and beyond education include various kinds of positive action initiatives as demonstrated in the typology.

The majority of these projects are primarily driven by the need to support or provide opportunity for the professional development of women in music. Some initiatives are genre specific such as Yorkshire Sound Women who provide training and development opportunities in more experimental genres, Female Pressure works in dance and techno genres and Saffron Records provides support with music technology.

These initiatives, similar to BSN, blur and bridge the boundaries between participatory-focussed, community practices and the professional arena. They provide different methodologies for opening up new spaces for women. By deliberately stating this, the transformation of a physical space can be broadened to include a transformation of the meanings associated with that space. As the agency chapter has shown this opens up the conditions for supporting musical participation in an unoppressed and liberated way. This approach, while recognised as a strategy more broadly in other sectors (e.g. in quotas or targeted training) has not yet been fully explored within the music industry where inequality still manifests through specific labour conditions. These gaps and areas of need - in terms of alternative or safe spaces, non-gendered artistic practices and the processes behind the domains of consumption and representation - still need to be broken-down or bypassed.

In relation to the manifesto the support offered through funded arts and cultural organisations has been highlighted as an important area of intervention to the business-as-usual activities of the music industry which positions the marketplace as the dominant measure of accomplishment. It calls for greater resource and recognition with regards to the support provided by the funded sector, a deeper understanding of the issue of 'supply' into the professional sphere and a closer awareness from and engagement with the music industry.

3.Live Music (see manifesto [here](#))

As referenced in the Agency chapter, the statistical under-representation of female artists in live music is one of the most visible reflections of the gender gap. It is

generally brought to public attention through an annual journalistic flashpoint discussion which raises the lack of female representation at British music festivals. While festivals alone are not the problem, each summer their posters provide a focal point for media discussion in relation to gender parity, particularly when it comes to headline acts.

In terms of tackling this inequality A PRSF led initiative, KeyChange has been developed with the aim of galvanising a collaborative movement of festivals across Europe to commit to gender parity in their programming by 2022. Since launching in 2015 the pledge has accrued over 140 festival signatories and a further 400 music organisations all declaring allegiance by brandishing the KeyChange logo on their posters, websites and merchandise (KeyChange, 2020). despite this public show of solidarity, analysis led by The Guardian newspaper in 2021 still highlighted an average of under 40% female representation across 31 UK festivals²⁶. This statistic highlights the lack of accountability associated with such a scheme and the fact that ultimately it is the individual programmers who are relied upon to make a change. This re-opens the broader discussion relating to the supply and commercial viability of female artists which has historically been excused by the industries 'market-led' argument.

As reflected in the media (Guardian, 2021 and BBC, 2019) this debate has implications in terms of the distinction between the business case for diversity and the 'creative case' for diversity. While the 'creative case' for diversity, as set out by ACE, is positioned as a creative imperative for the funded sector, the business case for diversity has yet to provide compelling enough evidence to identify a causal link between improving diversity and boosting business outcomes. In relation to the music industries 'market will provide' position, Breen states: "This macro-level perspective offers an entry point to the imperatives of global music production-consumption and the global trade regimes that enhance corporate profitability, to the detriment of micro-level musical activity". In an industry built on a commercially subjective framing of talent and taste, the reductive argument of 'we need more women' can be dismissed on commercial grounds. Festival organisers and

²⁶ The analysis again included TRNSMT with 61% all male acts, Isle of White festival at 73% male line-up and Kendal Calling's partial line up featuring 79% men.

programmers interviewed in this media debate have spoken of their challenges to increase female representation, particularly when it came to festival headliners. Commenting in the Guardian, Emma Zilmann, Programming Director at Kendal Calling (of whom Both Sides Now is a curating partner) explained that the festival was founded in 2006, “so the amount of relevant, affordable, available artists that we haven’t had before is so small,” Booking emerging acts featuring women and non-binary performers was easier, she said. “Once you get to the level of an artist that [sells more than] 400-500 tickets regionally, it becomes a lot harder. (Snapes, The Guardian 2021). Zilmann goes on to say that festivals are only the endpoint often following a year of touring, a notion that reinforces the narrative of this thesis that more work needs to be done at multiple-levels of the industries supply chain in order to improve gender diversity.

To return to the KeyChange quota based approach, outside of the commercial debate, it faces a challenge relating to the stigmatic perceptions of this practice as preferential or tokenistic treatment. According to Takagi and Gröschl (2012) this relates to the distinction between procedural and distributive justice, the former pertaining to the perceived fairness of the process and the latter focussing on the fairness of the individual outcomes. They highlight research into the psychology of justice which indicates that “individuals are far more concerned with fairness in how decisions are made, rather than fairness in the results of these decisions (Tyler, 1987; Barrett-Howard and Tyler, 1986)” (2012:3). Applying this to the use of quotas, they suggest that the controversy caused by mandating quotas can deflect attention from the issues which need to be addressed, stating, “By focusing attention on distributive justice rather than procedural justice, quota measures actually fail to leverage on people’s sensitivities in terms of justice. This also leads to quotas being easily misconstrued as preferential treatment instead of being seen as a remedy to an exclusionary system” (2012:3). This suggests that a stronger approach would focus more on the area of procedural justice by exposing the structural bias that restricts female representation. Social mobilising around quotas fails to address underlying issues of discrimination and while there are arguments in favour of it for the overall shift in representation, through the principle of proportional representation and a change in narrative, it is not enough to simply focus on numbers as a means to achieving equality.

Within the typology there are a number of other initiatives which have live music and performance as their primary area of focus, all of whom actively curate all-female line-ups these include Hear Her festival in Poole, Sistafest in Oxfordshire and HERfest in Leeds and Sheffield (of which BSN is a partner). These movements create what O'Shea (2014) describes as "feminist music worlds" (2014:122) reflecting on Ladyfest as a pioneering model within this practice. O'Shea suggests that these all-female environments create a safe space for "women to take ownership of and participate in music, activities and gender-based activism" (2014:123) countering male dominance. These initiatives also consider the notion of 'safe space' within live music, which can be highly male dominated environments. In most of these initiatives, and in the BSN programme, the concept is rooted in creating a culture where women are 'free from and free to' as I once heard a participant say. This has different connotations to traditional 'safe space' where the onus is on feeling 'safe from and safe to'.

The 'safe from and safe to' perspective is represented in the taxonomy through the Safe Gigs for Women initiative, carrying out advisory work to create safer gig environments for female performers and audience members. The movement has a dual role of raising awareness and offering advice and support to music venue and festival teams as well as gig goers and performers aiding a deeper understanding of the conditions where sexual violence can occur and strategies for deterring, preventing and tackling it. As research from Hill, Hesmondhalgh and Megson (2020) highlights "assaults significantly affect women audience members and musicians, and impact negatively on venue reputations" (2020:3). Hill's research analyses the work of Safe Gigs for Women in the context of change and highlights the strengths of the campaign in identifying and challenging the norms that enable sexual violence to occur and learning to deal effectively with incidents when they do happen. Hill suggests that the impact could be improved if moving from more of an individualised approach to that of a community citing the strength of a multi-venue 'code of conduct' as a possible improvement alongside the need for more female owned or run venues. These are views reflected in the manifesto, removing an often overlooked area of vulnerability for female audience members and performers.

4. Parenthood (see manifesto [here](#))

When distilling this theme of the manifesto I specifically selected the broader term of 'parenthood' (rather than motherhood) with the intention of reflecting that care-giving responsibilities are not essentially gendered. However, despite arguing this, I am all too aware, that in reality "women remain disproportionately affected" (Berridge, 2019:646). Motherhood is a very specific dimension of women's experience and according to Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) the literature comparing fatherhood and motherhood in creative careers shows little or no impact for men but for women:

"not only is there a set of harsh questions about their career and life choices, but they can be stripped of their identity as creative workers and positioned solely as mothers. In turn they are presented with a set of narrow expectations that they will abandon their creative work in favour of caregiving" (2020:225-226).

Whilst not the only factor impacting the professional progression of women in music and the broader creative industries, it is widely documented as a major, under-discussed and overlooked barrier (Jones and Pringle, 2015; Berridge, 2019, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020). Despite the heightened visibility of feminism at the time of writing, Gill (2014) highlights "a lack of critical vocabulary to speak out against gender inequalities, rendering them 'unspeakable'" (2014:511). Berridge suggests "that there is a silencing around the challenges of reconciling caring responsibilities with creative work, connected to the new labouring subjectivities demanded by these industries" (2019:646). While there are positive features attributed to the adaptable traits and new perspectives enabled by the transition to parenthood, the academic research on the subject highlights three main areas which stand in the way of women's career progression, these are: a perceived incompatibility between creative careers and parenthood; challenges relating to the pay and conditions of the sector (demanding and anti-social hours, low or irregular income and voluntary work); and the assumption that people should be grateful for this work, for which there is an oversupply in the labour market (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020).

These areas resonate with the crowd-sourced calls for change in the manifesto and also with my own personal experience of parenthood, which despite giving rise to the perspective that initially motivated my enquiry, has been an experience that I have consciously kept absent from my personal vignettes. Whilst being a parent has undoubtedly made me view my career from a different perspective, I am aware of friends, participants and artists that I have worked with who have had much greater difficulty combining parenting with a creative career. Some have had to stop or dramatically change career path; others have lost confidence in their ability as creatives or in their power to challenge their work-based expectations. Many have had to adapt to a gruelling life of permanent and challenging compromise where concerns for balance and wellbeing are not an option. Simply put “cultural occupations are hostile to parenting and associated caring responsibilities” (2020:236)

There are few examples of type of strategic response to the problems for women musicians compounded by parenthood. Only one organisation identified in the typology addresses this topic. Parents and Carers in the Performing Arts (PIPA) are a research-based, advocacy group whose work explores and exposes the connections between career progression in the arts and care-giving responsibilities. Their *Balancing Act* survey (2019) highlighted the challenge of combining creative work with other responsibilities was the number one factor in people leaving the sector. “Of those who took part in the survey, but had left the industry, 43% identified caring responsibilities as the main contributing factor followed by low income and financial instability (40%)” (McDowall et al, 2019:4) Of those still working 76% had turned down work because of caring responsibilities, slightly higher at 80% if only counting mothers. (McDowall, 2019).

At the heart of the manifesto is a call to engender a culture of care and support for those with caring responsibilities and greater social value placed on the wellbeing, contributions and opportunities of the 4.9million working mothers²⁷ with dependent children in full or part time work. The manifesto proposes a collaborative approach to creating useful and accessible resources, building supportive networks and infrastructures around festivals and venues. Recognising the scale of this issue there

²⁷ According to figures published by the Office of National Statistics in 2017 for working mothers in the England

is an additional call for greater lobbying at all levels to draw attention to this overlooked area of need.

5. Leadership (see manifesto [here](#))

As discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter one statistics relating to structural positioning, pay and responsibility within the music industry consistently point to an ossification in the upper echelons, upholding the ‘somatic norm’ of white, male, middle class leaders and decision makers (Eikhof, 2019; Brook, O’Brien and Taylor, 2020). The earlier discussion pertaining to the topic of Parenthood has highlighted this as one, all be it highly significant, of multiple factors often used to explain or account for this phenomenon due to the hostile and exploitative conditions associated with creative work. Brook, O’Brien and Taylor (2020) suggest this reflects “The failure of cultural occupations to create an atmosphere of support for parenting, and in particular for mothers [which] has a whole range of consequences beyond just the impact on the demographics of the sector, especially in senior and leadership positions” (2020:246). However, they also state: “we should not let motherhood obscure the wider sexism present in many parts of the creative economy” (2020:222) as I go on to explore.

Interview data from Leonard (2014) reveals “how gender stereotyping can limit access to job opportunities and how gendered behaviour can be enacted within the workplace to exclude or regulate women’s participation” (2014:135). This material raises experiences of male domination with “a lot of bragging and a lot of arrogance (2014:131) or where “employees were encouraged or even expected to adopt particular patterns of gendered behaviour” (2014:131). The data also exposed women “marked out as different because they could not or did not want to, engage with the performative culture of homosociality” (2014:132). These issues, ideas and experiences have been recurrent throughout the thesis and were strongly visible in the Postcards reinforcing a familiar picture with regards to the hierarchies of power and control in the music industry.

Beard (2018) refers to this issue as the challenge to “fit women into a structure that is already coded” (2018:86) going on to suggest that as a society, we work from the

premise that “our mental, cultural template for a powerful person remains resolutely male” (2018:53). These historical tropes and their pervasive effects are enacted through what Ibarra, Ely and Kolb (2019) refer to as second-generation bias.

“Second-generation bias is embedded in stereotypes and organizational practices that can be hard to detect, but when people are made aware of it, they see possibilities for change” (2019:46). This raises two important factors in the context of change-making and the BSN manifesto: generating awareness of these underlying behaviours and opening up a space for new practices to emerge.

Beard highlights the narrow treatment of power as an object or possession that only men can wield and suggests: “Thinking about power differently and decoupling it from public prestige” (2018:87) to create a new ‘cultural template’ that positions women inside the structures and spaces of power.

This urge towards new ways of doing things is reflected in the manifesto which calls again for greater access to resource and networks, giving women the opportunity to build their social capacity and explore the concept of leadership in a way that is authentic. According to Ibarra (2015), becoming a leader happens as a result of a deliberate act of identity transition. A transition that comes about by doing. You learn how to lead by leading. It is through doing and growing in confidence that you grow into your leadership style. She states:

“Across the globe, men and women are taught very different standards for how to conduct themselves; male standards invariably come closer to what most people code as leadership. So in the workplace, women face the infamous double-bind, whereby if they “act like a leader,” they are too manly or aggressive, but if they “act like a woman,” their leadership can go unrecognized, especially as they position themselves to move up to the highest levels” (2015:144)

This suggests that identity consists of both how we see ourselves and how others perceive us. If women want to claim or feel more comfortable in a role as a leader, they need to see themselves as leaders and have the opportunity to try out behaviours that fit with the leader they want to become. Similar to the discussions in chapters one and two with regards to female artists developing an authentic identity

– women need to be given the time and space to test and experiment with leadership styles that align with their core identity.

“In the upper tiers of organizations, women become increasingly scarce, which heightens the visibility and scrutiny of those near the top, who may become risk-averse and overly focused on details and lose their sense of purpose. (In general, people are less apt to try out unfamiliar behaviours or roles if they feel threatened.) Thus, a safe space for learning, experimentation, and community is critical in leadership development programs for women” (2019:46-47).

This need reflects the calls in the manifesto for this to be an area of consideration for organisations and to cultivate the conditions and broader community connections to test what leadership means. This is something I am developing, at the time of writing. As a direct result of this practice-based research I have conceptualised and secured funding for a multi-faceted leadership development programme, to support early and mid-career female professionals working in the music ecology of the North (more details can be found in the legacy section of the [portfolio](#)). Other initiatives which are providing support in relation to this theme include Women in CTRL whose report (as briefly discussed in the introduction) publishes data on the gender balance in senior roles of the twelve industry trade bodies. While quotas, as discussed in the section on live music, are not without their challenges, they act as a benchmark to progress and an imperative to keep the agenda of equality and representation under review.

Within the industry attempts are being made to showcase established professionals as leaders, commending them through initiatives such as the Music Week²⁸ ‘Women in Music’ awards. However, the decision by Music Week to hold a separate event for women, rather than to ensure their representation in the flagship Music Week awards²⁹ has met with a mixed reaction on social media and in journalistic discourse describing it as a “backwards step, ghettoising women” and “needless and harmful

²⁸ Music Week, described on their website as ‘the most read and trusted trade media brand in the music industry and a key source of news, data, analysis and opinion.’ (Music Week website)

²⁹ Which recognises (all) the people and organisations working in administrative industry roles

segregation” (Coughlin, *The Guardian*, 2014). These comments reflect some of the negative concerns relating to affirmative action work, particularly as in the case of Music Week, when the motivation is not made transparent and is intertwined with the commercial agenda of selling (overpriced) tickets for the event³⁰. The politics associated with arts prize giving as a form of recognition is explored further in *Street* (2002).

Change Chapter Reflections

The discussion in this chapter has evolved over three main sections. The first section reflected on the process of developing the Open Space and conference events. It illustrated the ways in which self-organising and affective solidarity can facilitate a respectful exploration of conflict to evoke debate and mobilise future facing conversations about change. My role as a practitioner-researcher has enabled me to analyse and make meaning through experiences that are felt, embodied and interpreted. According to Firat and Kuryel (2011) “This is where the importance of the collaboration of critical theory with praxis lies. The engagement of critical theories with activist practices opens up a productive space where different epistemic coordinates of the political stance(s) can be theorized. It is only through this theorization that the limitations, dilemmas, and paradoxes of these political practices, as well as their achievements and possibilities can be illuminated” (2011:48). The collaborative practice of invoking embodied knowledge alongside critical theory has been central to the ways in which accounts of sexism were relayed and interpreted highlighting key areas in need of urgent reform pertaining to the working cultures and practices across the music landscape.

The second section offered a critical engagement with the polemic of manifesto making setting out the prevailing characteristics and stylistic traits for this genre of writing. The process illustrated a number of key considerations to carry forward in the production of the BSN Manifesto as a compelling, future facing document for change.

³⁰ In 2021 an individual ticket for the awards cost £299 plus VAT

The final section outlined how the themes emerged and were identified, before going on to unpack the manifesto's words and calls to action. I identified what the practical implications were for the identified areas of change-making through further analysis and in relation to other existing strategies for change which were featured in the typology. Drawing together the key themes from the Open Space and conference events alongside reflections of other contemporary 'women in music' initiatives has enabled me to better situate my practice within the broader context of change-making

Through this process, the manifesto has been developed to offer insightful, effective, proportionate and evidence-based recommendations for change-making. It reflects ways in which the research and practice can help to move the struggle for equality beyond rhetoric and acted as a reminder of the power of positive actions, and feminist organising. In terms of BSN this shift from an artistic to an activist practice has opened up a new dimension to the programme and demonstrated further how the funded sector can drive change. In this context, the learning and impact of BSN has led to a number of new legacy developments which will continue to grow and evolve this change-making practice further. More details can be found [here](#) in the practice portfolio (over ten slides). In the case of the manifesto the final phase of work will include a public launch of the document on International Women's Day 2022. The launch will be followed by a campaign for individuals and organisations to adopt the micro and mezzo pledges and an open letter which calls for greater change on a macro scale.

Conclusion

Both Sides Now: Reshaping a Discipline

This thesis has been driven by the primary concern of better understanding what needs to change to make the industry more gender equal, and how. Through this process I have examined the social, cultural and structural factors which relate to the under-representation of women in the music industry. I have asked questions which relate to the barriers and constraints which deter access and limit the participation of girls and young women. I have also examined the ways in which female artists face, then address, personal, public and systematic inequalities through creative enactments of agency. Furthermore, I have explored the ways in which my practice, and the work of other arts organisations, can support artists in navigating and reversing this gender gap. In this final section I draw together this learning and reflect on the implications of these findings through recommendations and potential further research in this field.

The process has been guided by my practice and an openness to learning which has been enriched by the methodological principles of feminist research, grounding the study in a culture of care and connection. This has enabled the affective components of experience and emotion to emerge, offering insights into the subtle effects of inequality produced by the institutions within which we are educated, live and work (Probyn, 1993; Hemmings, 2012). This approach has challenged the convention of emotional reasoning as secondary to rational thought and re-presented affective influences, interactions and reactions as crucial knowledge in the struggle against inequality. Affect has been a core thread throughout the thesis that has facilitated the way I looked at the relationship between access, agency and change. This has opened up new knowledge that is felt and embodied and offered a contemporary understanding of ways in which the practices and structures of the industry are discriminatory. I believe the method is a strength of this study and offers a potential framework for future researchers. Through this I have argued the misconception that it is enough to simply 'just add women' and suggested that greater work is required by individuals and organisations to more fully understand the emotional consequences of the repetitive actions and opinions which reinforce the narrative of 'othering'. This learning has been explored and tested through the

practice by the development of different types of soft infrastructure, predominantly an all-female curriculum, a creative safe space and the Open Space approach of transitioning affective dissonance to affective solidarity - all seeking ways to reshape the landscape of music.

Reflecting on the existing evidence around the gendering of industry practices this thesis has added new perspectives in the broader context of fourth wave of feminism and the temporal location of my practice during a critical moment of feminist rising. Driven by a personal and professional commitment to making change I have outlined the evolution of my research interests, tracing my journey to 'becoming feminist' and affirming my role as a 'diversity practitioner'. As suggested in the introduction, my role as a feminist practitioner-researcher has opened up a productive space in which to theorise the limitations and dilemmas faced by female musicians, as well as illuminating their achievements and possibilities through a combination of lived and learned knowledge. I have summarised the insights that have concomitantly arisen by weaving them into the narrative arc of the research journey. The live context of this research has permitted me to explore innovative ways to incorporate these multiple perspectives into my research in order to generate new knowledge and develop a model of interventionist practice in this field. The scale of the project and level of investment have instigated a new way of working for myself and for Brighter Sound, putting a commitment to 'diversity' practice at the forefront of the work and providing an underpinning framework for this investigation. The three chapters bear out this assertion in part, but they also show additional contexts, as the analysis below recounts.

The first chapter of the thesis analysed the gendering of musical learning and the implicit values system that influence girls and young women subsume during the formative stages of their development. Utilising Eisentraut's *Theory of Music Accessibility*, my research interrogated the historical and contemporary issues of gendered representation which influence early perceptions of the self, the body, and models of social organisation, on three interconnected levels. This analysis shows the cumulative impact of these barriers on a physical, personal and participatory access. Through this I have argued that from their first musical 'access', girls are constituted as *other*, their early musical taste is either ridiculed or discounted as

unimportant, and the stars that they idolise are limited in agency and labelled as lacking heritage. As these young women pursue their musical interest, they enter into a system of education which has been designed and developed *for men by men*, learning a curriculum which marginalises women's contribution to society. These absences in turn influence the work that students learn about and the fact that women are neither represented nor their absence discussed further marks their contributions as less meaningful. This contributes to limiting the styles of practice that emerging artists feel they have to pursue in order to get their work into the public domain.

The learning from this chapter reinforces the research hypothesis, contributing critical insights into the significance of this period of identity formation and positioning the pathway into professional music as an important site for reform. It rationalised my decision as a practitioner to target educational-level change and the importance of the BSN curriculum as an intervention on the cyclic reproduction of male dominance. Through the development of the Charanga resource I have disrupted the recurrent issue of absences and offered an alternative resource for classroom teaching rooted in female creativity and constructed through a feminist lens. It is my hope that this thesis opens up a space for new critical dialogue around the need for democratized representation and encourages further work and research into the feminizing of access to music-based development opportunities, challenging what exists and imagining new possibilities.

In chapter two the focus shifted to explore individual acts of disruption in the lives of professional musicians asking a question I have referred to throughout the thesis – how can things be better. This was examined through the lens of agency from a feminist and artistic perspective. Drawing on the work of feminist theorists including Butler, Walby and McNay, I presented a framework from which the artistic enactments and frustrations of agency could be understood. This framework proposed a multi-layered relationship between actors, actions and structure, introducing new modalities of agency and strategies of resistance. This was developed through a theorisation of affect and an empirically grounded account of individual acts of resistance. The framework was developed in an attempt to progress the discourse of agency beyond the positioning of women as in need of

something they lack and away from the notion that they have insufficient power and resources to implement wide changes.

The stories and experiences captured in chapter two evidence existing structural shortfalls within the industry and the norms and expectations that shape and block women's creativity and agency. Focussing on the primary concepts of production and reproduction within the music industry, this analysis further highlighted the structural failings that shape women's experiences and the ways in which traditionally male 'objects' and 'bodies' work to control the experiential spaces through affect. This opened up a wider understanding of feminist agency, looking at and beyond conventional structures and institutions to explore elements of the social and phenomenological.

Through this primary research the artists spoke about different strategies they had adopted to bypass codes and conventions through the destabilisation of accepted norms and by challenging subjectivity through the resistance and incorporation of alternative narratives. This included using gender neutral or even masculine names and finding space in exploring genre boundaries, particularly within experimental music which is both genreless and genderless rather than embedded in a masculinist tradition. Rather than just recounting the stories as facts, I also tried to enable the emotion attached to these encounters to show. As Ahmed states: "When emotions are seen as only personal, or about the person and how they feel, then the systematic nature of their effects is concealed" (2014:198). By taking this approach I have attempted to show rather than erase the complexity of the inequality within the industry and justify my call for multi-level reform. Through these insights I have argued for the integral importance of understanding different agential perspectives in order to improve the working lives of women in music.

The analysis of the BSN residency demonstrated the impact of alternative infrastructure and a facilitated 'safe space' as a temporary disruption to the conditions in which the participant artists were working. The observations and anecdotal feedback from this analysis illustrated ways in which, through this intervention, the artists had formed musical and social bonds. It also demonstrated how they had broken free of gendered boundaries to deploy transgressive strategies

of creation and performance and explore and experience new musical possibilities. These enactments of performative resistance illustrate women transcending repressive representations, inscribing their position in traditional genres and shaping and influencing new musical movements. Theoretically, this captured the practice as part of an ongoing process of micro-level cultural and social change-making and provided new understandings into the conditions and ways in which these artists produce their work and music as a social practice.

At the heart of the analysis presented in the Change chapter is a shift from artistic practice to activist practice, probing and developing the relationship between BSN and an exploration of the processual and contingent practice of making change. The discussion in this chapter reflected on the process of developing the Open Space and conference events. It illustrated the ways in which self-organising and affective solidarity can facilitate a respectful exploration of conflict to evoke debate and mobilise future facing conversations about change. The reflections on this process, highlighted Phipps' (2016) incisive point that "experiences are invested into feminist politics" (2016: 306) and demonstrated how the personal becomes political.

The critical engagement with the practice of manifesto making as a strategy for change illustrated a number of key considerations to carry forward in the production of the BSN Manifesto. This marked a significant shift in the outlook of the programme, opening up ways in which the research and the practice can help to move the struggle for equality beyond rhetoric

The themes which emerged were organised around the BSN Theory of Change as a framework for understanding the different ways in which encounters and emotions can enter into the narrative of change making, highlighting recommendations on multiple levels. The five themes of Education, Artistic Development, Live Music, Parenthood and Leadership highlight the breadth of inequality in the industry and the micro-, mezzo- and macro-level recommendations show how deeply entrenched sexism is within the entirety of the music landscape. This structure facilitated integration of the wide ranging findings that have emerged throughout the thesis and

sought to draw attention to the affective constraints and their complex connections with social, cultural and structural practices.

The analysis showed the ways in which interventions can engage with collaborators, stakeholders and the wider industry to challenge ideas about gender and identity and promote greater equality. It demonstrates the different levels relating to the different aspects of participation in the industry on an individual, social and organisational level. It evidences the value of bringing lived experience to the front and centre of the change discourse unlocking micro level detail through the concept of affect. Fundamentally this contributes to my driving argument that change is required on multiple, intersecting levels in order to comprehensively respond to this inequality and to reshape a discipline which has for too long overlooked and under-valued the contribution of women.

The legacy to this work, as referenced throughout the thesis and in greater detail [here](#), acts as a reminder of the power of positive actions, and feminist organising. I believe there is further scope for future research to expand this discourse in relation to change making through this multi-layered approach with more granular analysis at each level and a commitment to valuing different modes of knowledge production.

The process of writing this thesis concurrently with developing and delivering the Both Sides Now programme has enabled me to bring feminist concerns into the operational practices within the music industry, exploring the gendered processes which position women as 'other' while simultaneously co-existing within the same cultural contexts of their male counterparts. My analysis has uncovered patterns associated with historic ideologies, subjectification, sexualisation and structures overlooked as problematic because they are regarded as natural. Across this analysis I have tested my theory of change and the findings support my hypothesis that there needs to be a greater emphasis on change-making as a strategic imperative and that a deeper level of engagement and collaboration at all levels of the music landscape is required in order to lever power and resources to implement wider change. The development of the BSN Manifesto is an important addition to this discourse amplifying personal experiences and forging a link between cultural

practices and cultural policy and further positioning the funded sector as drivers of change.

The thesis portfolio serves as a valuable contribution and point of learning through which I have presented my research and shared my practice, ensuring the findings are relevant and accessible to a range of other professionals working in music and seeking to create change. Importantly, this study has provided a platform for marginalised voices to be brought into discussions about the cultural reshaping of a discipline which has for too long excluded women's full value and contribution. In response to the framework of Access, Agency and Change, the three main chapters have provided validation to this activist practice, creating and participating in this discourse for change. Collectively the thesis demonstrates unequivocally that change is needed, and that change is possible, and with the next phase of this work through the launch the BSN manifesto it is my intention to make change happen.

Interviews and Personal Communications

Hawley, R. (2019) Rebecca Hawley, Stealing Sheep band member, interviewed by Kate Lowes on 10th April 2019

Orton, B. (2019) Beth Orton, artist, songwriter, interviewed by Kate Lowes on 11th March 2019

Smith-Rolla, H. (2019) Henrietta Smith-Rolla (aka Afrodeutsche), artist, interviewed by Kate Lowes on 9th March 2019

Bickley, C. (2019) Charlotte Bickley (aka Carlos) artist, interviewed by Kate Lowes 11th March 2019

Smith, R. (2019) Rachel Smith (aka Lady Ice) artist, interviewed by Kate Lowes 5th April 2019

Feshareki, S. (2019) Shiva Feshareki, artist, interviewed by Kate Lowes 15th March 2019

Williams, C M. (2019) Carla Marie Williams, songwriter, interviewed by Kate Lowes 13th March 2019

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